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SWISSAIR

HOME NEWS

Civil servants' union will urge members to resist new technology

By Donald Macintyre
Labour Reporter

The biggest union representing higher grade civil servants will be urged next month to resist the use of new technology in Whitehall departments where the main aim is to cut jobs.

The executive of the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) will recommend that the union's annual conference approves a union paper giving a warning that the Government is "seeking to reduce Civil Service employment as much as possible and seeking to use new technology to achieve this."

In an attempt to stiffen opposition to the planned introduction of microprocessors in government, the union is expected to back the policy of placing a moratorium on such national developments pending a full national agreement with all staff unions representing civil servants.

The staff side of the National Whitley Council is pursuing negotiations with the Civil Service Department on the introduction of new technology although it is unlikely to reach a national agreement on the subject before the main Civil Service union annual conference is originally hoped.

The staff side is arguing on the basis of a policy paper that opposed the national introduction of microcomputer projects before agreement is reached while accepting that limited experiments could go ahead.

There are at least four computer projects which have been or are threatened with delays because of union resistance.

Among the projects that

might be affected is Computer Assisted Planning in the Area of London.

That is a project by the Manpower Services Commission for improving the speed of matching unemployed people with vacancies.

It has been welcomed by the unions provided it is used to expand the service rather than to cut staff. The Government has made clear, however, that staff savings should be achieved by the project's introduction.

The Data Transmission System for Local Office Benefit Inquiries is a project in the Department of Health and Social Security designed to speed the answering of social security benefit inquiries. It has been blocked by the Civil Service unions pending a national agreement.

The Word Processing Experiment at Darlington is a project in the Department of Education and Science designed to use microtechnology for work done in the typing pool of a government department. The project showed gains in productivity of from 10 to 70 per cent.

There are plans for the Central Computer Agency to expand the Darlington project to test its efficiency in about twenty stations carrying computerized keyboards. Unions have resisted that expansion. Land Registry Computerization is another project planned to use new technology to replace manual clerical labour in registering and transferring land titles.

The SCPS paper argues that the benefits of new technology are "obvious in theory."

Local groups to promote disarmament planned

By Ian Bradley

Local committees are to be set up in every part of Britain to promote the cause of world disarmament after the success of a national convention held in London on Saturday.

More than 2,600 people attended the first convention of the new World Disarmament Campaign in Central Hall, Westminster. It was the biggest disarmament meeting held in Britain since the Aldermaston marches organized by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1960s.

Lord Brockway, co-chairman of the campaign, said yesterday that he was extremely pleased at the turnout at the convention. "We have now established a movement with extraordinary support from the churches, the trade unions, peace organizations, women's organizations and groups such as Oxfam," he said.

The campaign would establish a full-time organizer and office and set up "coordinated councils in every locality to provide the public with information of which at the moment they are completely ignorant."

The campaign aims to put pressure on the United Nations special disarmament assembly in 1982 through an international petition.

Lord Brockway said that the campaign is in favour of negotiated world disarmament and does not urge unilateral action. He thought it would be possible to obtain a thousand million signatures throughout the world on petitions to be presented to the United Nations special assembly.

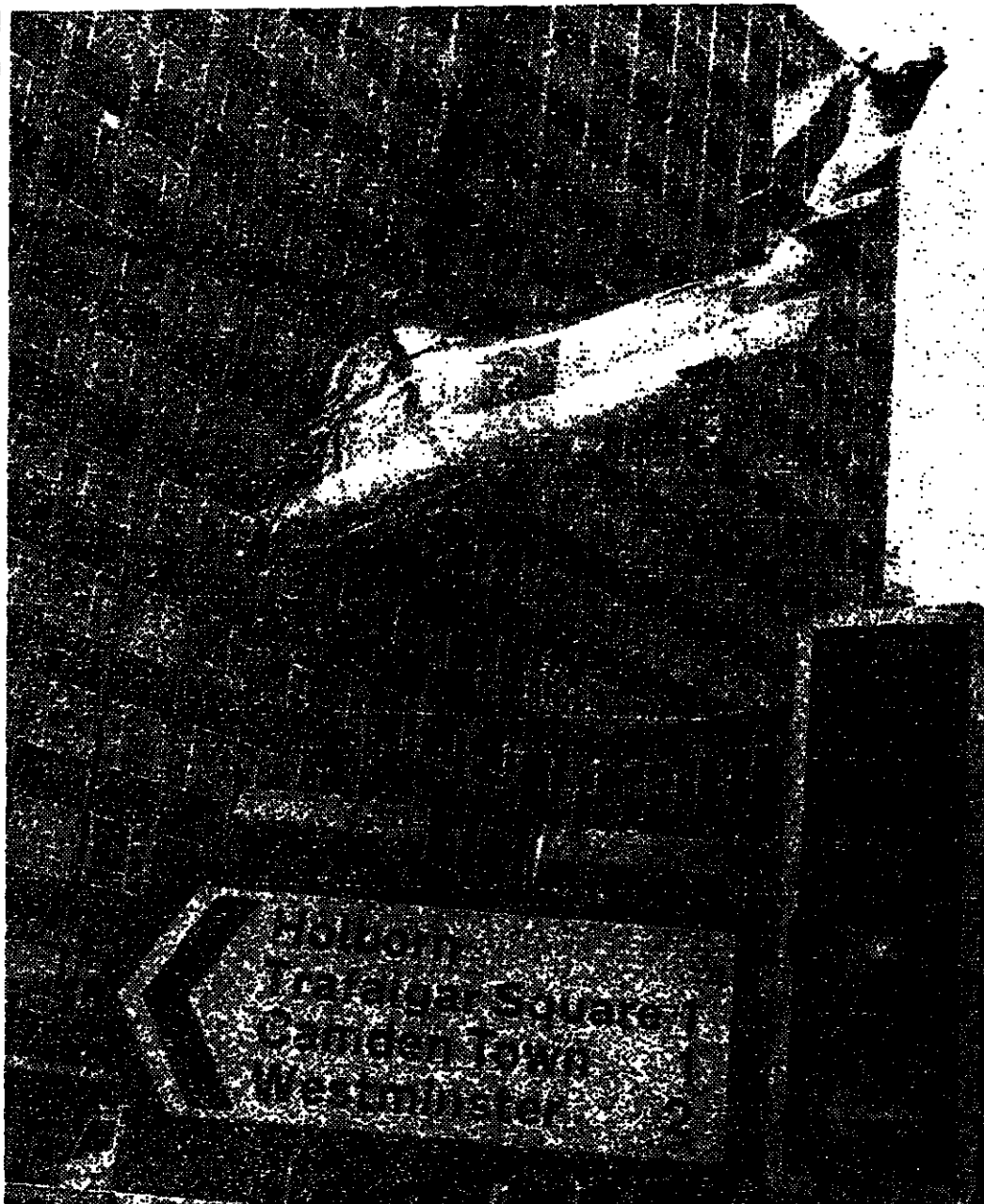
"Already the Japanese alone have got 25 million signatures on a disarmament petition," he said.

Cardinal Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, one of the main speakers at Saturday's convention issued a warning against making "bogymen" of the Russians. He said that it was possible to drift into a war no one wanted "simply on the assumption that we are faced with a sinister adversary."

He said: "The USSR is a state that is officially godless, but it is hard to accept that it is totally devoid of humanity. It is urgently necessary that we continue to talk to the Russians."

The convention was also addressed by Lord Soper, Lord Noel-Baker, Mr Jack Jones, CH, and by Minako Matsubara, a Japanese girl aged 12 whose uncle was killed by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

The campaign hopes to organize an international convention next summer. "There will be no hall big enough for it," Lord Brockway said. "We shall need an open-air stadium."



Operation Water Chiller: A Sikorsky helicopter hovering near the heart of London yesterday as Captain "Rip" Pearson manoeuvred his craft into position. The helicopter was lifting a large, air-cooled water chiller from a courtyard to the roof of the Post Office's 15-storey premises in Gower Street. No mobile crane was large enough for the operation, which took only two minutes.

Consumer anger over 'bargain offer' mud

By Robin Young
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Mr Gordon Borrie, the Director General of Fair Trading, is to meet the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) on April 22 to try to persuade them to resume their task of regulating the use of misleading price comparisons in advertising.

The meeting has been arranged as a matter of urgency for the first day after Mr Peter Thomson, the director of the ASA, returns from business in Leeds.

The ASA's decision to suspend the lengthy section of the British Code of Advertising Practice which deals with price claims has dismayed both the Department of Trade and the Office of Fair Trading, and infuriated members of consumer groups.

The unannounced decision is seen by some as an attempt to undermine the Price Markings (Bargain Offers) Order, which became law last July. The order makes it a criminal offence for advertisers to use misleading price comparisons or imprecise and vaguely worded price claims the validity of which it is difficult for consumers to check.

The detailed provisions of the order are widely resented by traders and advertisers, but Mrs Sally Oppenheim, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, confirmed recently in Parliament that she intended to keep the order in the statute book and to ensure that it receives a fair trial.

Under the order it is illegal for advertisers to suggest that goods are worth more than the price at which they are being sold, or to say that their prices represent savings of "up to" a certain percentage. All price comparisons must be made with precisely identified traders' prices.

Mr Peter Scruton, the independent chairman of the ASA's code of advertising practice committee, which took the decision to suspend part of the code, has expressed regret that the step should have been thought necessary, even on a temporary basis.

Mr Christopher Rogers, spokesman for the local authority trading standards officers, who have to enforce the order, says that it is likely to be many months before cases

are brought to court. New legislation to prosecute traders who try to persuade consumers to "comply," he said.

"Even when proceedings are brought it takes six months in my area (Westminster) for the case to court."

Mr Rogers said that attitude was irresponsible like saying motorists should have the guidance of a new Code until they have been convicted of a criminal offence.

Trading standards departments were hard pressed and would go unchecked there were specific cases.

The flow of illegal advertising, meanwhile, continued. On Thursday national newspapers, *The Times*, carried an advertisement for Lar which included an offer of £200 worth of free goods with each new subscription.

Since details were where those accessories actually cost £200, that meant technically no article VI of the Price (Bargain Offers) Order.

Spokesman for Lancia on Friday that they were of the opinion that the order, and would have included four ad which contravened the bargain offers order.

More in *The Times*, said: "It is a users' responsibility that their copy conforms to the order. Our department has a copy of the Markings (Bargain Offers) Order."

Miss Rosemary E. deputy director of the Association, said: "The order is a very important one and we are asking to be told if they are saying they want to know when cases of illegality are made."

Inquiry to be held on housing demolition

By John Young
Planning Reporter

A public hearing is to be held before a district auditor on Wednesday into the alleged misuse of powers by Redbridge Borough Council, east London, for the premature demolition and cutting of houses in advance of public inquiries.

The hearing is believed to be the first of its kind to be held under the terms of the Local Government Act, 1972, Section 139 of the Act provides that any decision made by a council which is subject to an extraordinary audit of a local authority's accounts.

The request has been made by the Housing Emergency Office, which has links with Shelter and with the National

Federation of Housing Associations. Its legal officer, Mr Ronald Bailey, said yesterday that he would argue at the hearing that the council had acted outside its powers.

The usual argument put forward by local authorities for demolishing or gutting properties in areas scheduled for redevelopment is the need to deter squatters and to save themselves from protracted eviction proceedings.

Mr Bailey, who is closely associated with campaigns on behalf of squatters, said he intended to ask for similar hearings into the activities of several other councils, including Bristol, Cannock, Ealing, Lambeth, Portsmouth, Salford, Southwark and Swansea.

Social workers remove babies

By a Special Correspondent

Social workers are fighting child abuse by removing an increasing number of newborn babies from maternity wards.

Mr Alan Treddinick, Cornwall's assistant social services chief, and Dr Anthony Fairburn, a consultant psychiatrist, said that at least 160 babies have been taken away from their mothers.

Their research, based on the first national survey of social services departments, suggests that at least fifty babies a year are being removed. They found that child abuse and neglect was the main reason, but babies are also being removed from psychiatrically disturbed parents.

Mr Treddinick said that removing a baby from its parents was "the most distressing task" he had ever undertaken as a social worker. He was particularly concerned at the "alarming implications" of such action, carried out without parental consent. Either before the birth or soon after it, the mother is told of the decision and the council later applies for a care order. That can mean a mother is denied access to her child for the rest of their lives.

Mr Treddinick described the process as a "hard, brutal measure" but he said the inhumanity had to be set against the enormous pressures on social workers to guarantee that no child suffers. Dr Fairburn was concerned at the effects on mothers who

suffer a bereavement when their baby is removed from the maternity ward. "They are very confused, and think the professional services are against them," he said. "Sometimes they regard their solicitors as their only friend."

Concern about the policy was expressed by Miss Patricia Hewitt, general secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties. She said that such parents are in a weak position.

The pendulum may have swung too far from parents' rights, however, social workers' increased vigilance has been defended by social services chiefs.

Mr Kenneth Anderson, social services director in Ealing, London, said that social workers have to play safe.

Ban on live sex shows 'strikes at freedom'

By Alan Hamilton

Live sex shows should be permitted in Britain as they are in France and Holland, a pressure group campaigning for changes in the obscenity laws has told Mr William Whitelaw, the Home Secretary.

The proposal has been made by the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Act (NCROPA), in a 12-page written response to the report of the Williams committee on obscenity and film censorship, set up by the former Labour government.

The committee, while suggesting a relaxation of some of the current laws, proposed a special prohibition relating to live sex entertainment.

NCROPA, which gave evidence to the committee, says that such a prohibition would create the "absurd anomaly" that what could be shown in publications and in films could not be shown live.

To try to prohibit such shows, even in private clubs, strikes at the root of the democratic freedom of consenting adults.

The submission adds that all kinds of sexually explicit material, whether films, books or magazines, should be treated alike: there should be no pre-censorship, only preclassification.

Call for moves to keep Britain cleaner

By Alan Hamilton

British politicians, both national and local, appeared to lack the will to legislate for a cleaner environment, Mr Walter Tysoe, president of the Ramblers' Association, told the association's annual meeting at Bath University on Saturday.

Giving as an example the possibility of making all bottles and tins returnable, he suggested that there was public support for such measures. Given more determined efforts, even more support would be forthcoming.

Mr Tysoe cited a recent television programme which stated that Britain spent more than £4,000m on imported raw materials and another £106m to throw them away.

Fortunately the ever increasing costs of raw materials and the need to save energy had led to much rethinking about the fate of household and industrial rubbish.

"It is no longer true that it costs more to sort out the junk than it is worth," he said. "The technology of separating it mechanically is here."

Of derelict land, he observed that Wales had ceased making annual returns after 1969 and that Scotland had never started. In England returns seemed to have suddenly stopped after 1974.

'Referendum' by conduct

From Our Correspondent
Peterborough

A bus conductor who criticized his union in the local press is refusing to pay a £1 fine imposed by the union. He faces expulsion and the loss of his job.

Mr Robert Renphrey, aged 52, of Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, lost an appeal against the fine and the Transport and General Workers Union has given him a week to pay. He said yesterday that the

decision was unjust as him freedom of speech work for 20 years, he is the public to guide his.

"I am holding a referendum to settle the matter."

"If at the end of the majority of people want to me say 'Pay up', the union will say 'No'."

His attack on the union in a letter to his local paper in which he criticized the union's handling of a strike out a proper vote.

Fierce clash on US missiles stirs the fenland

By Lucy Hodges

The quiet fenland of East Anglia, with its red-brick buildings and flat, arable fields, is finding itself in the middle of a fierce debate about nuclear weapons.

In the space of three months a campaign has made its views heard through public meetings and two demonstrations, the last of which, over the Easter weekend, attracted about 700 protesters and made national headlines.

Parallels have been drawn with the CND movement of the late 1950s, but this resurgence of popular feeling has more broad-based support and is at the same time more specific than the post-war Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It has got off the ground with a speed and efficiency that has caught the pro-nuclear lobby napping.

Mr Eldon Griffiths, Conservative MP for Bury St Edmunds, has joined the fray by protesting about a referendum which was to have been held in the Suffolk village of Brandon last Thursday, but was postponed at the last minute. He decided to hold his own meeting that day instead "to discuss the matter in the way the democratic system should do."

The debate centres on the possible siting of cruise missiles a mile and a half from



Mr Eldon Griffiths: Putting the case for better arms.

Brandon, at the United States Air Force base at Lakenheath. Those nuclear weapons are still being developed in North America, but NATO has decided to adopt them and the British Government has agreed to install a number here by 1983. It has not decided where to put them, but Lakenheath and the United States base at Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire, seem the most likely sites.

Opponents of the missiles base their arguments more on a general opposition to nuclear

arms than on any specific objections to the possible dangers of having cruise missiles on their doorsteps. At Mr Griffiths's meeting there was talk of "peace, love and understanding" being the best way to secure the nation from outside aggression.

Perhaps the most successful rallying cry of the campaign, which has former an organization called Against Cruise Missiles in East Anglia, is its demand for consultation of the local people before a decision is taken on the site. To this end a group of Brandonians invoked schedule 12, part III of the Local Government Act, 1972, to ask for a local poll to be taken of popular feeling.

That was where Mr Griffiths, who is in favour of the missiles, stepped in. After taking legal advice he declared that the question proposed for the poll was illegal because, first, cruise missiles were a national rather than a parish matter; second, the question referred to the whole of East Anglia; and, third, the positioning of the missiles was still moot.

The district council's returning officer sought legal advice from the Home Office and the others, and has said that the question should be rephrased but that the poll can go ahead. The result has been more pub-

licity for the anti-nuclear campaigners.

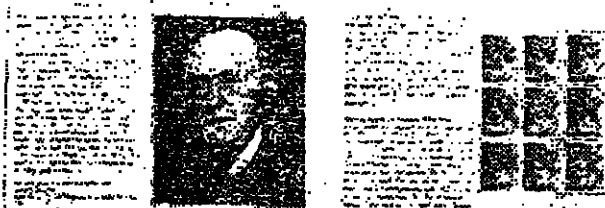
Mr Griffiths, however, has a lot of support for his from his constituents, whom he has lived all his life in that heavily defended area of Britain, and are used to the sound of F111 fighters.

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Every stamp collector will want the story of Wedgwood



The colourful new Wedgwood stamp booklet. It celebrates the 250th anniversary of the birth of Josiah Wedgwood. A must for everyone interested in stamp collecting—or in Wedgwood.

Twelve full-colour pages make compelling reading on Wedgwood, the company and its products—with illustrations of some of the most famous Wedgwood pieces. Text and the panels of stamps (13 x 12p; 13 x 10p; 7 x 2p) are integrated in an entirely new way.

This booklet is issued by the Post Office in collaboration with Wedgwood. It is the second joint venture: the earlier booklet, issued in 1972, is now a collectors' item.

"The story of Wedgwood" is at your Post Office from April 16—while stocks last. The price is £3—the face value of the stamps it contains.

Whether you're a collector of stamps or Wedgwood—or are simply on the look out for an original gift, this is a booklet you can't afford to miss.

British STAMPS
collectors' items

—from your Post Office

OVERSEAS

Iranian confidence on sanctions tempered by fear of Moscow

From Edward Mortimer
Tehran, April 13

The Iranian regime is confident that it can survive Western economic sanctions but fears that in doing so it may be pushed into closer dependence on the Soviet Union than it would wish. That emerged today from an interview given to *The Times* by Mr Ali Reza Nobari, chairman of the Iranian Central Bank.

Mr Nobari cited Cuba and Nasser, Egypt, as countries that had resorted to Soviet help in overcoming Western hostility. He appealed to Europe and Japan to help Iran avoid the same fate.

Mr Nobari, aged 32, and until last year a post-graduate student at Stanford University in California, owes his position to his close friendship with President Abolhasan Bani-Sadr.

He exudes self-confidence and friendliness, in contrast to the suspicion or even hostility displayed by some other leaders of the Islamic republic in the presence of western journalists. He also makes no secret of his determination to exercise direct control over the Iranian economy through the banks that were nationalized last year and are now under the Central Bank's authority.

Iran's foreign exchange reserves stand at more than \$15,000m (about £7,000m), Mr Nobari told me, that amount, \$1,200m is frozen in the United States, and another \$2,000m is frozen in American banks in Europe pending the outcome of litigation.

"Everything boils down to this," he declared. "Is Europe ready to go with the United States and repeat the experience of the Mossadeq period, following blindly the interests of the United States—and also

those of the Soviet Union, since they also have their stake in the matter—or is it prepared to use our people and our revolution for the benefit of getting more independent from the United States? Is there the political willpower in Europe to get rid of this domination?"

Europe should see, he went on, that Iran and other countries are fighting to escape from the influence of the United States and do not want to fall under the influence of the Soviet Union, therefore they need help from Europe and Japan.

Iran was less afraid of Europe, he explained, since "Europe doesn't have the basis to become a superpower" and therefore was less likely to pose a threat to Iran's independence.

On suggestion that it would be easier for Europe to help Iran's economic development if Iran were not holding American diplomats as hostages, Mr Nobari said: "Even if I, Bani-Sadr, and everybody else says this, it doesn't justify any economic strangulation in that sense. That makes it worse for the hostages and for the people who are working for peace and justice."

(This was a reference to President Bani-Sadr's efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis, which were thwarted by Ayatollah Khomeini's decision last week that the hostages should remain in the custody of their student captors.)

If people were sincere in their desire to free the hostages, Mr Nobari said, they should use incentives rather than threats, and should support Iran "in her fight to get a criminal back, to get back the wealth he has taken and to reach true economic and political independence."

Mr Carter admits fumbles in relations with allies

Continued from page 1

action of an incisive nature", he said.

On the situation in Afghanistan, the President was categorical that unless "a clear signal" was sent, telling the Kremlin they would suffer from the invasion, there was the danger of "increasing encroachment by the Soviet Union against other countries."

In his condemnation of Soviet atrocities, Mr Carter complained that Mr Brezhnev, the Soviet President, had welched on assurances given to himself and to President Giscard d'Estaing of France that Soviet troops would be withdrawn.

Soviet actions were "morally indecent," he said, "cannot imagine the democratic or freedom-loving nations adding their approval to the Soviet invasion by sending teams to the Moscow Olympics."

There had to be collective Western response. He expected it to be "entirely on American actions. But where, because of Persian Gulf oil, the interests of Europe are much more seriously threatened than our own," the West must make clear "that further aggression will be severely met by a more consistent and a more forceful action."

As for the Olympics, Mr Carter suggested it would be difficult for the Soviet Government to explain to its own people why "maybe 70 other nations" refused to take part. He admitted this was only a "broad range," but said that "20 or 30 nations" had announced they would not go.

Forgotten Britons 100 days in captivity

Britain's forgotten kidnap victims complete their 100th day in captivity today as prisoners of Colombian guerrillas (the Press Association reports).

Mrs Teri Jones, aged 43, and her son Owen, aged 17, were taken in January with their 6,000-acre Andean ranch near the border with Venezuela by guerrillas posing as soldiers. Since then there has been almost complete silence about their plight, condition, with no details of any ransom demanded or word about negotiations.

A spokesman for the British Embassy in the Colombian capital of Bogota said: "I am not allowed to tell you anything. There has been no change at all."

Mrs Jones, who was born in

Wales, and her son were snatched from their home near Cynffwrdd, near Swansea. Alwen Hughes, aged 79, and her other sons Howard, nine, and Morgan, five, the Colombian Army combed mountain-side jungles for days in search of the kidnapping gang. Mr Hughes, 30, understood to be led by a former priest.

Military sources in Colombia suggested last month that a rumoured ransom demand of £50,000 had been reduced to £50,000.

Mrs Jones's father, Mr Hywel Hughes, took the family to Colombia some years ago to start ranching. They also have a large house in Anglesey, on the Menai Strait, where they spend several months a year. Now it is unoccupied, except

Economic decline and pressure for change undermined President Tolbert's party, in power for 110 years

An unknown sergeant shatters facade of political stability in Liberia

By Kenneth Mackenzie
Editor of *West Africa*

Liberians often boasted about the stability of their country: from independence in 1847 to last Saturday it had never had a coup. The seizure of power by the unknown Sergeant Doe thus came as a great shock. But there is a history of politics behind the eruption.

President Tolbert, who had been in power since 1971, regarded himself as a reforming, even revolutionary president. Like President Tubman before him (1943-71), he made strong efforts to bridge the gap between the descendants of the freed American slaves who founded the country and the indigenous African population, who until post-war times suffered serious discrimination.

President Tolbert also specialized in campaigns to ease the lot of the poor, often with

catchy titles: "From Mat to Mattress", "War on Ignorance, Disease and Poverty", "Total Involvement", and so on. He himself was a Baptist preacher and made many ringing speeches against corruption and in favour of discipline and accountability.

However, his True Whig Party was formed in 1860 and had been in power since 1870. In those circumstances it was hardly surprising that there were substantial areas of corruption. Pressures for change had been mounting, particularly from the young and most especially from those educated abroad.

Economic decline in recent years caused by a fall in demand for iron ore, Liberia's principal export, increased tensions. The huge expenditure (over £45m) on the Monrovia summit of the Organization of

African Unity last year did not help.

The first overt sign that things were seriously wrong came on April 14 last year—shortly before the OAU summit. An organization called the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL), which had originated among students in America, called for a demonstration in Monrovia against suggestions that the Government might increase the price of rice.

Thousands turned out and the police lost their heads and opened fire. Officially 49 were killed (unofficially more than 100) and dozens of others were injured. Since then political life in Liberia has been intense and active.

PAL, under Mr Gabriel Bacus Matthews, a young academic who had spent many years in America, applied to be registered as a political party.

There were delays, but early this year it emerged as the Progressive People's Party (PPP).

Mr Bacus Matthews, in an interview published in *West Africa* in February, described his party as a "revolutionary movement". He denied it was Marxist, however, and said it was pragmatically in favour of "African Socialism". It was opposed to personality cults and would concentrate first on the mass mobilization of the people.

Another political movement making itself felt at this time—was the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA), under the chairmanship of Dr Togba-Nah Tiptoteh, a former professor of economics at the University of Liberia.

This takes a more orthodox left-wing stand. "We are work-

ing to set up a new society in the interests of the masses," Dr Tiptoteh said in an interview.

The climax of the drama that led to the coup began on March 7, when Mr Bacus Matthews and his PPP issued a call for a general strike that was intended to bring the Government down. This was an astonishing move, apparently suicidal, but it would seem now a deliberate gamble.

It immediately resulted in the party being banned and 76 of its members, including Mr Bacus Matthews, being arrested. Charges of sedition and treason were brought. There were stories of severe beatings.

President Tolbert, in one of his last important speeches, said the security police knew of a PPP plan to execute an armed insurrection.

MOJA issued a statement pressing claims about "corruption and 'dishonesty'" and "the PPP's 'at best, infantile and ridiculous'."

It felt that the "inmate 'aggression'" which some Army men were bringing to the "present situation of the social, economic and political institutions."

One of the first to be released all the PPP who were reported to be celebrating in the street. So far little is known of the political plans or of the role of the Army. It seems, however, that Bacus is a name that is going increasingly heard in affairs.

EEC recalls envoys in protest gesture

From Tony Allaway
Tehran, April 13

EEC ambassadors last night were preparing to fly out of Iran in what was regarded as an indication of the European Community's impatience with Iran's failure to release the American hostages.

Amid some confusion, with some ambassadors still awaiting confirmation of their "recall" by their government for consultations, there seemed little doubt that all eight EEC ambassadors and the Irish chargé d'affaires would leave. The Japanese Ambassador said he would follow suit on Tuesday.

Shortly before the announcement of the envoys' withdrawal the official Pars news agency had reported that the militant students holding the hostages had bowed to Government pressure to allow a visit by Red Cross officials to all the hostages.

The British Embassy confirmed today that Sir John Croft, the Ambassador, would be leaving tomorrow.

The departure was in line with an EEC resolution taken at Lisbon last Thursday that the ambassadors would be recalled after a meeting with President Abolhasan Bani-Sadr yesterday. During the meeting the ambassadors passed on the European Community's call for the immediate release of the hostages and told the President that their further moves would depend on his answer.

The President told the ambassadors that nothing could be done for the hostages until Iran's Islamic Parliament met, possibly next month, although he promised that the International Red Cross would in the meantime be allowed to visit all the hostages.

According to EEC sources here, that answer will not be enough to persuade some of the countries to send their ambassadors back to Tehran. "It is quite clear that our governments are under extreme pressure from the United States not to send the diplomats back," one EEC source said.

"We will have to come up with something in order to get back. But ambassadors are undoubtedly returning with proposals for getting round this."

Opinion among embassies about the value of the move varied widely. Some ambassadors appeared to be leaving against their will. In the view of one senior diplomat, the move took the member states of EEC "one step nearer sanctions."



Senator Edward Kennedy, campaigning in California, tells reporters in Santa Monica of a new opinion poll that puts him ahead of President Carter.

Gandhi mediation fails in Assam

From Richard Wigg
Delhi, April 13

Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister, has failed to reach agreement with Assam's student leaders to end the mass agitation which has been going on for seven months in the north-eastern state against so-called "foreign settlers."

Last night, the student leaders said after Mrs Gandhi's one-day visit there that their agitation—stopping public life and oil production, the state's main economic activity—would continue as before to force the expulsion of millions of Bengalis and Nepalese from Assam.

The Delhi Government now has to decide whether to use the emergency powers it announced a week ago, sending in the Army to dislodge those Assamese who have been picketing the oil installations at the students' request since last December. This has prevented, Assam crude-making up almost half of India's total domestic oil production—from reaching the rest of India.

Mrs Gandhi's patience with the Assamese students may now

be exhausted, but the Government may first prefer to continue in the Indian courts the interim 10-day stay on the emergency powers which a local citizen in Gauhati obtained last Monday from the Assam High Court. He claimed that the emergency powers, such as arrest without warrant, were discriminatory: for Assamese and contrary to the Indian constitution.

The state government, now in the hands of a governor sent from Delhi, owing to the collapse of the local administration in the wake of the students' agitation, has already banned strikes in essential services and is holding preventive detention powers in reserve.

Mrs Gandhi did not try very hard to work out a compromise formula with the student leaders, whom she saw only for 20 minutes.

She urged them to take the 1971 electoral rolls as the basis for starting the process of identifying those "foreigners", chiefly from what is now Bangladesh and West Bengal, who had emigrated to Assam. That would be a reasonable way to

"see the size of the problem", she argued, without committing herself clearly on whether that year would be the cut off point for deportation or not.

The Prime Minister did not, apparently, foreclose further discussions on that crucial issue. But the student leaders went back to insist on their initial negotiating demand that the year must be 1951, a date generally accepted as unrealistic. It shows, however, the students were unwilling to trust Mrs Gandhi, take 1971 as a starting point and suspend their whole agitation.

Mrs Gandhi's reference to 1971 had the backing of the All India political parties who attended a recent conference on the Assam controversy called by her. But the governor, as her representative, had recently suggested 1967 as the cut off year as a possible compromise.

One further compromise formula being canvassed in Gauhati was that those settlers identified as foreigners who came between 1961 and 1971 should lose their right to vote, but be allowed to remain in Assam.

Papal message expresses 'great disquiet'

From Peter Nichols
Rome, April 13

The Pope this weekend called for "great disquiet" in the Iranian crisis in a message addressed to Ayatollah Khomeini, as well as to President Carter, Dr Kurt Waldheim, the United Nations Secretary General and President Bani-Sadr of Iran.

In his message, the Pope expressed his "great disquiet" and hoped for a solution which would "permit the safeguarding of peace in reciprocal respect by the countries concerned."

Paris: M. Raoul Delhaye, the French Ambassador to Tehran, is expected to arrive in Paris within the next 24 hours to tell his Government about the outcome of his meeting yesterday with Mr Bani-Sadr. He has taken an approach together with the other ambassadors of the EEC countries, which asks for release of the American hostages.

Bonn: West Germany is ready to cooperate with the United States in economic sanctions against Iran but only within the framework of all EEC countries.

America and Iran in step on boycotting Olympics

By Our Foreign Staff

The United States is the seventeenth country to decide to stay away from the Olympic Games in Moscow. In this matter, if in nothing else, Americans and Iranians find themselves in agreement. The American Olympic Committee delegates voted 1,607 to 797 on Saturday against going to Moscow.

"We are confident that other leading nations of the free world will join in this demonstration. No nation is entitled to serve as a host for an Olympic festival of peace while it persists in invading another nation," Mr Jody Powell, the White House Press Secretary, said yesterday.

Sir Denis Follows, chairman of the British Olympic Association, said yesterday that the United States Olympic Com-

mittee had been pressured into a boycott by "patriotic fervour."

He said he was not surprised. But he was nevertheless disappointed. "The standards of the games will be lower without the Americans."

The British Government has strongly supported President Carter's view that the Olympics should be boycotted. But it has not, of course, interfered in the British Olympic Association's decision to send a team.

Meanwhile the French Government has been unambiguously against a boycott and has left the decision to its national Olympic committee. In Germany, Herr Helmut Schmidt, the Chancellor said yesterday that the Soviet presence in Afghanistan forbids West German participation in the Moscow Olympics.

The Canadians said the American action did not affect their own plans to send a team. "We have decided to send. Now the ball is in the Government's court."

Mr Malcolm Fraser, the Australian Prime Minister, has urged athletes to boycott the games.

First group of Cubans flying out

Lima, April 13—The first group of 283 of the 10,800 Cuban refugees who have gathered at the Peruvian Embassy in Havana will be airlifted to Lima on Tuesday, Colonel Heracleo Fernandez Pineda, head of the Peruvian Civil Defence, said.

He said the mission will be coordinated by the European Immigration Commission and that aircraft from Miami will be sent to Havana.

The refugees crowded into the Peruvian Embassy compound were showing signs of hysteria and becoming aggressive towards Peruvian diplomats, a newspaper here claimed.

A correspondent in Havana for *La Prensa* said the crisis over the refugees could "explode" at any moment.

The Peruvian Government has called for the establishment of an emergency diplomatic commission in Havana to study ways of evacuating the refugees, to ensure guarantees for the safety of Peruvian officials in Cuba, and to overcome "the difficulties being made by the Cuban Government."

Polish dissidents detained in raid on flat

Warsaw, April 13—Police detained 10 Polish dissidents on Friday, alleging that they were preparing to stage ceremonies to mark the thirty-seventh anniversary of the Katyn massacre.

The graves of about 6,000 Polish officers, taken prisoner by Soviet troops in 1939, were found in a forest near Katyn in 1943.

A spokesman for the dissent Self-Defence Committee said yesterday that police raided the flat of Mr Jacek Kuron, where 13 communist members were attending a routine monthly meeting—Renter.

End of New York strike causes high-level quarrel

From Michael Leapman
New York, April 13

Although New York's underground trains and buses began running again yesterday, the end of the 11-day strike by transport workers has provoked serious dissension on both sides of the dispute. In particular, it has caused an open quarrel between Mr Hugh Carey, Governor of the state, and Mr Edward Koch, Mayor of the city.

Mr Koch insists that the settlement, under which the workers will get a pay increase of about 20 per cent over the next two years, was too generous. He is worried that it will be taken as a precedent by the state. The four negotiators are negotiating in the summer. This, he says, would bring the city close to bankruptcy as happened in 1975.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which runs the buses and underground trains, has 14 members, most of whom are appointed by the state. The four negotiators by Mr Koch voted against the settlement on his instructions.

Mr Koch said yesterday that he had discussed the settlement with Mr Carey by telephone and "the call was not pleasant for either of us." The two have never enjoyed more than a lukewarm relationship since Mr Koch supported someone else for the mayoral nomination in 1977.

Polugayevsky meet Korchnoi chess semi-final

Moscow, April 13

Polugayevsky, the Soviet master, went through to final encounter with Korchnoi, the exiled grandmaster, in the world championship quarter-final. He drew the eighth with Mikhail Tal, the grandmaster, in their 11th game, the capital of Kazakhstan, on the third move, giving Polugayevsky a 5.5 to 2.5.

Polugayevsky won his eighth game against

Kampuchean warlord disappears after his stronghold is destroyed

From Neil Kelly
Bangkok, April 13

Mr Wan Saren, the self-proclaimed president of the National Movement of Kampuchean Liberation, appears to have lost a long battle for control of about 200,000 Kampuchean guerrillas near the Thai border.

Battles against other non-Communist Kampuchean guerrillas, allied with Khmer Rouge guerrillas, over the past three days destroyed the warlord's stronghold at Camp Reabou and scattered his supporters.

His whereabouts are unknown. He was last seen on Friday and since then has been reported killed, in prison in Bangkok and sheltering in a heap of black ash like most other buildings in the sprawling encampment. Only a few of his supporters were still there today, picking over the smouldering ruins.

Fighting involving Vietnamese soldiers, Khmer Rouge guerrillas, non-communist Kam-

puchean factions including his own and, from time to time, the Thai Army has been going on since Mr Wan Saren established himself at Camp Reabou seven months ago with about 100,000 supporters.

Nobody is sure of the number killed during that period but certainly 150, mainly women and children, died in the past three days.

As well as proclaiming himself head of the liberation movement, Mr Wan Saren acquired an additional name, "Yong Arichwong" (literally, the Rays of the Sun) and gave himself the rank of Marshal.

He built an elaborate headquarters with radio communications, flags and banners, a string of aides, regular statements for the world's press and plenty of food and drink for visitors.

He named a Government of 60 ministers but none of them were soon telling journalists that they wanted no cabinet seat but an air ticket to France, the United States or Australia. Most of them are now in refugee camps in Thailand.

Originally Mr Wan Saren rallied about 250,000 people to his personal banner, which depicted a mythical Khmer figure devouring communism, with forceful speeches about patriotism and the evils of communism. Many of his supporters were well-educated members of the middle class. Some were Christians.

He claimed to be one himself and was never seen without a golden cross hanging from his neck.

His background is shadowy. He says he was a captain in the right-wing government army which lost to the communists in 1975 and that he was the first to open a resistance campaign against Pol Pot.

"I began with just one shotgun," he said. Later with a few followers he made hit-and-run raids on Government stores for weapons, ammunition and other stores. He said he switched his attacks to the Vietnamese after their invasion 15 months ago.

His enemies say he conducted no resistance but was busy smuggling timber and gems into Thailand from which he made a fortune including a palatial house in Bangkok.

Similar accusations of corruption were largely responsible for the downfall of Mr Wan Saren, although he vehemently denied accusations by the International Red Cross that he was selling rice and other relief supplies in Thailand and Kampuchea for his own profit.

His relations with the Red Cross became so acrimonious that all food supplies and medical care were cut off on occasions for as long as a week at a time. Red Cross officials reject allegations that those accusations caused some deaths.

Nevertheless some independent foreign witnesses as well as Thai officials do not look favourably on some Red Cross and other aid workers at Camp Reabou and elsewhere.

Directors of six American relief agencies, after visiting refugee camps recently, condemned the inclination of relief workers to "move in and take over everything" as disastrous

and indicated that a smaller foreign presence would be a good thing.

The English language daily newspaper, the *Bangkok Post*, published two reports this weekend critical of Red Cross methods at Camp Reabou. To keep food distribution in their own hands, Red Cross officials, according to the reports, were herding hungry refugees into enclosures to queue for rice.

Many of the Kampuchean could not understand "incomprehensible instructions" shouted by foreign officials. Chans resulted and many of the Kampuchean after waiting for hours in the sun were left hungry while lorries still laden with rice drove away.

The same reports alleged that some Swiss Red Cross workers had manhandled children with some violence and threatened them with sticks.

Concern about some foreign relief workers has been apparent for months. The chief difficulties appear to be too many people in some categories of workers, the unsuitability of

some in terms of experience, training and temperament and their inclination, by taking everything into their own hands, to exclude refugees from decisions and even work.

The Thai Government is now considering recommendations made by an official committee that all foreign aid workers should undergo an orientation course in Thailand before going to the camps.

The committee says the course would improve working relationships in the camps and produce better results.

The course would be designed to increase foreigners' understanding of Thai Government rules and methods and of Thai and Khmer cultural and social values.

One example of inappropriate "communications behaviour" quoted in the report is: "Foreign workers raising their voices, showing loss of temper, and pounding the desk—all unacceptable behaviour to Thais."

Prisoners conscience



Czechoslovak Albert Ce

By Caroline Moorehead

Mr Albert Ce, a Czechoslovak, was sentenced in 1978, to three years imprisonment by a general court at Brno, for possessing and distributing documents, as being a member of the resistance for the Defence of the Czech Republic, in the Czechoslovakia as Vons shot of Charter 77, in April 1978, to mobilise the Czechoslovak people (country). He is married two children.

During his trial, Mr Ce said that in all his life he had acted out of a sense of duty. He said he was not an independent, he argued that Vons was form of appeal to the state organs, and that books by authors not in Czechoslovakia was a form of human rights help. He admitted, in a text entitled "A letter to the Pope, and from Rudolf Battak, a European social democrats."

He said the political prisoners in Czechoslovak jails are "incarcerated" under "100 of the penal code article states that 'any act of hostility to the socialist system and its organs' shall be punished."

Mr Ce, who was sentenced under Article 155 of the Criminal Code, has appealed against his sentence, and continues to be in the only for greater of not only for social Czechoslovakia but with all leaders in the West.



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HELPING PRESIDENT CARTER

is a bad moment for the American alliance. President Carter has told it that it must give it and aggressive support to Iran against Iran or see him on stronger measures on his own. These measures might include military action. In the full television interview shown by the BBC last night he came over as somewhat belligerent than in his condensed reports before, but he has clearly decided to take Iran a test of western unity.

It is right to want help and in general to be disappointed with his allies but he has in the wrong issue as a test. It is putting Iran above all else when he should be in a better position, rather than a test of the ability of the alliance to act together. It represents a frontal assault on the Soviet Union to the interests of the A non-aligned country has been invaded and brutally repressed. Soviet power has been changed. Here, if any, the west should be acting in unison. Its failure to do so is lamentable, dangerous and deserving of rebuke.

It presents a different problem requiring a different response. A group of terrorists sized and held hostage American citizens. The dilemma is genuinely difficult. There are two main arguments

Iranian Government is now formally responsible since it apparently refused an offer to take over the hostages this is not a case of a properly constituted government deliberately confronting the United States. It is a case of a disorganised government unwilling to act—and it is the government of a country with which United States and the west need friendly relations.

As in Afghanistan there are general principles at stake as well as human lives. There are the principles of international law and diplomatic privilege, and there is the principle that international terrorism cannot be tolerated. America's allies have a general interest with the rest of the world in defending these principles and a special obligation to help an ally in trouble. But the obligation is imposed by friendship, not specifically by membership of the alliance, whose interest is the broader one that relations with Iran could be important for the future security of the west. The problem now is that this concern for the alliance is felt to be in conflict with the obligations of friendship, for President Carter is asking for action which may feel could jeopardize the long-term interests of the alliance. Yet even the obligations of friendship do not require automatic support for policies which could lead all the friends into trouble.

Thus the decision for the western alliance has been not whether to help President Carter but how best to help him. The dilemma is genuinely difficult. There are two main arguments

for increasing the pressure on Iran. One is that it imposes deserved penalties for illegal behaviour. The other is that it might stimulate the moderates in Iran to take action before the country suffers even more damage. Sanctions might enable them to argue that the price of holding the hostages was becoming too high.

The main arguments for continuing patience are that it denies the revolutionaries the confrontation they seek and is more likely to save the lives of the hostages. In other words, stiffer sanctions might work but they carry the risk of playing into the hands of extremists, inflaming the situation in Iran, and endangering the hostages. Patience, on the other hand, will produce no quick results but is probably safer for the west and for the hostages. It may look weak in American terms but it could just as well be called wise, and it is weaker than the address patience habitually used in dealing with hijackers and other terrorists holding hostages.

Unfortunately another consideration has now been introduced by President Carter, which is that if the alliance does not support a tougher policy his own policy will become tougher still. It is therefore obvious that the alliance will have to go some way with him if only to hang onto his coat tails. This is not a pleasing prospect but it is the lesser of two evils. Meanwhile it would help if more attention were given to Afghanistan and less to Iran.

WRONG SCOTTISH PRECEDENT

iminal Justice (Scotland) which comes from the Lords and reading in the Commons today, is an important precedent providing Scotland's justice system with reformed reforms of law and order. Most of the Bill is devoted to a few clauses however, with reason, become a subject of controversy and a police officer's powers to detain and arrest, going considerably further than any powers of the police in England, Wales, and providing safeguards for the individual. The provision which acted particular disquiet from a wider range of critics than is the case when infringing civil liberties are would give a constable the power to detain, without a suspect, and to interrogate for six hours.

Government's spokesmen Bill have defended those on the grounds that they intend to counter crime and that they merely recommend the recommendations of the Committee under Lord of which reported in its criticisms point out that those proposals carefully with the extension of police powers with the provision of all safeguards for the especially the tapeing of all interrogations.

but that the Bill provides for the one without the other. They are naturally apprehensive that the powers might be abused, and are concerned lest the sensitive relationship between the police and the community be harmed—a fear shared by some senior police officers. The police organizations had not, in fact, asked for such powers in their evidence to the Thomson committee.

It is not merely a question of whether the controversial clauses are objectionable in themselves. What is at issue is the approach of Parliament at Westminster to Scottish legislation. Scotland has its own criminal justice system (as indeed it has many of its distinct laws), which differs from that of England in important respects. Traditionally, Westminster has allowed Scotland effective control over its criminal procedure, and has not interfered in areas of the law and practice in which it has been judged, rightly, that the Scots know best what is good for them.

But Westminster is still responsible for Scottish legislation. It has the duty to scrutinize proposed Scottish law to ensure that it does not offend against any basic principles of law or practice that should be uniform throughout the United Kingdom. For one thing, the European Convention on Human Rights imposes on the British government the obligation to ensure that its principles are adhered to throughout the kingdom. There is a limit even in

areas of the law which convention, leaves, to the discretion of the Scots, beyond which an issue ceases to be one of purely Scottish concern but becomes one of wider, national, principle. It is arguable that the rights of persons in police detention falls into that category.

It is particularly disturbing that these significant extensions of police powers are being debated and may become law only months before the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure is due to report. That body, of course, is limited to making recommendations about the system in England and Wales. However, the royal commission, unlike the Thomson committee, has conducted much detailed research into aspects of detention and interrogation. The lessons to be drawn from its studies would not be limited to the English experience.

It is not sensible that Parliament should be debating so highly contentious a law for one part of the United Kingdom when it will so soon have to address itself to the same issues for the rest of the country, on the basis of more reliable, comprehensive, and up-to-date information. There would be no difficulty in omitting those few clauses in the Bill which deal with police powers for future consideration, while enacting the remainder of the Bill, which is most of it, this session.

Doubts about strike control policy

From Mr. Jeremy Bray, MP for Motherwell and Wishaw (Labour)

Sir, My own reaction to the ATV programme (April 9) on the Saudi Arabian princess was that it was an unusually sensitive and sympathetic programme. It was respectful to the Arab family relationships, and to the princess's grandfather in particular. It allowed Arabs of varying degrees of Islamic fundamentalism and liberalism to state their views and to offer their interpretation of events.

It made no such barbarous assumptions, as some critics have done, that Saudi Arabia has to catch up on 500 years of history and that Arabs behave in a civilized way if they have been educated. It had an Arab saying that our difficulty in Europe in understanding both the princess and her princely grandfather was that we had lost the sense of being in our concern merely for having Saudi princes and princesses actually saw the programme I think they would find it sympathetic too. Certainly, I wish an Islamic television producer would give us as sensitive a picture of domestic tragedy in some de-mythified Western family to help us to understand better the tensions under which we live.

Yours faithfully, JEREMY BRAY, 25, of being the House of Commons, April 11.

From Professor Musa Mazzawi Sir, You say (April 11) that the Saudis have difficulty in understanding the "diffused responsibility" for what goes on in the public broadcasting channels in

Reactions to 'Death of a Princess'

From Mr. Jeremy Bray, MP for Motherwell and Wishaw (Labour)

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From Professor Musa Mazzawi Sir, You say (April 11) that the Saudis have difficulty in understanding the "diffused responsibility" for what goes on in the public broadcasting channels in

Britain. It does not seem that they do, and the statement by the Saudi authorities in London yesterday (April 11) recognizes the freedom of the media and says that the Saudis have no intention of interfering with it.

What points the Saudis and the Muslims generally is that the media in this country too easily criticize and insult things Arab and Muslim, and that they take liberties in this respect which they do not take elsewhere. Ironically, the fact that good relations of mutual benefit exist between this country and the oil-producing Arab countries has prompted some quarters in the media here to deliberately adopt a hostile attitude, just to demonstrate that they are free and independent and above material considerations.

The laws of defamation in Britain protect only individuals and not the group. The only protection for the Arabs and the Muslims have against abuse is the sense of responsibility and fairness of the media and of the public. The makers of this film, which has offended many people in Saudi Arabia and Muslim world, have a duty to substantiate and justify what they put out and to answer questions. This can be done openly and fairly in another television programme in which the producers and the film can put their viewpoint and argue their case.

Yours faithfully, MUSA MAZZAWI, The Polytechnic of Central London, School of Law, Red Lion Square, WC1, April 12.

Attitudes to Iran

From Mr. Chana Amaratunga

Sir, In the interests of truth, I feel compelled to refute some of the statements made in the letter from Dr. A. Afroz, Chargé d'Affaires of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in your issue of March 26. Dr. Afroz accuses the article by Mr. Temple-Morris (January 25) of being "spiteful and contemptible," a description more accurate of his own letter and the attitudes of his leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. How can rational persons be expected "to recognize the noble values and humanitarian goals of the Islamic Revolution" when that revolution has shown an intolerance and cruelty which I dare say has astounded much of the civilized world? The nobility and humanitarianism of which Dr. Afroz writes is the "nobility" of mass executions, whether they be of the Shah's generals and Iranians who were not his, or of Kurds and other rebels trying to win a share of autonomy, and the "humanism" of kangaroo court trials, ruthless lashings and other punishments.

What is revolting about the Islamic Republic is its hypocritical righteousness. Perhaps it is too much to ask Dr. Afroz how a regime which sacrifices the truly insane calls for blood from the Ayatollah Khomeini can with justification complain of the excesses of Savak?

I am not sure that Mr. Temple-Morris's statement that the Shah has suffered enormous and unjustified vilification" and would hasten to add for Dr. Afroz's benefit that I am not a "paid spokesman" of the Shah. I do not suggest that the Shah did not do good but it is only ridiculous fanaticism to have the Shah and his associates oblivious of the remarkable achievements of the Shah in economic, social and educational terms. Indeed much of the intellectual opposition to the Shah was based on the desire for educational reforms initiated by his father Reza Shah and by him. Dr. Afroz writes of "billions of dollars despoiled" by the Shah. Has he not thought for the billions of dollars spent on the Imperial regime on projects which were of benefit to the common people and of the

social service rendered by the Pahlavi Foundation?

Dr. Afroz states that the clergy men who lead the Iranian revolution have "high standards of political virtue" and that they are "completely free from such human failings as egoism and conceit." I presume it is these high standards of morality which prompted the Ayatollah Khomeini to say: "God willing, it is cancer" when he first heard of the Shah's illness?

It is about time that the truth be told. For all his weaknesses, the Shah of Iran will be regarded as a great statesman of the twentieth century. It is not the Shahanshah Ayatollah Khomeini who is Dr. Afroz's "lunatic clown" but his master, the Ayatollah. I have no doubt that the Prophet of Islam would find more to his taste the magnanimity of President Sadat than the vicious hatred of an old man who wrongly claims to speak for God.

Yours faithfully, CHANAKA AMARATUNGA, Oxford Union Society, Oxford, March 26.

From Mr. Carlos Larrea La Calle Sir, Your leader on the American situation (April 9) is too long, and the first part is one better than the British should know what a policy of appeasement is invariably mistaken for. Sometimes a bold approach is the only course of action and I feel this is the only one open to the United States now. In fact it should have been the Shah's right at the onset of the crisis, before the Iranians had time to organise themselves and become so arrogant in respect of the American hostages crisis.

As for the Soviet Union fears, they are the first to interpret attempts to compromise and be cautious as signs of fear and weakness to be taken advantage of. Some of us may be justified in thinking that the Afghan invasion is a corollary of the lack of American nerve and firmness in dealing with Russia could be equal to the United States in military power these days but hopefully even they will find little solace in this fact when facing total annihilation.

Yours faithfully, CARLOS LARREA LA CALLE, 59c Broadhurst Gardens, NW6.

Opening an again the Lords

Labour Party conference by an overwhelming vote to abolish the House of Lords. The House of Lords, which has been a subject of controversy since the 1945-50 period, was the subject of a report by the House of Lords Commission in 1969, which recommended its abolition. The report was based on the fact that the House of Lords was a relic of a feudal system and that it was not representative of the people. The report also pointed out that the House of Lords was a costly and inefficient institution. The Labour Party conference, which was held in Manchester last week, voted by a large majority to accept the recommendation of the report and to abolish the House of Lords. The vote was 1,000 to 100.

in meeting today, therefore, confidently predict that Mr. Benn and the National's home policy committee either or debate much the House of Lords in the draft coming before this Conference for approval. Of reinstatement will serve to rebuke to Mr. Callaghan's autocratic style, a warning precursor as party leader, and sop to the vanity of colleagues.

It is by no means the first time, of course, that Labour's policy-makers have understandably tried to remove the road-block of the House of Lords from its legislative path. The Anties of 1945-50 carried the 1949 Parliament Act, which pressed further the Liberal Government's reduction of Lords legislative delaying powers of 1911. In the early 1950s Anties discreetly withdrew from apparently reform because Labour leaders saw a strategic advantage in keeping the House unreformed, archaic in composition, and therefore indefensible if it asserted its powers.

Sir Harold Wilson's Manifesto of 1966, when his personal authority stood at a peak, set only a limited target: "Legislation will be introduced to 'safeguard' measures approved by the House of Commons from frustration by delay or defeat in the House of Lords." That fairly mild proposal was not carried into the House of Commons until the Bill was humiliated by withdrawal in 1969.

The new draft proposal before the Benn committee goes much further. It suggests that if abolition of the Lords were to be obstructed, then a Labour Prime Minister would create a Quilting peers to ensure that it goes through to Royal Assent. That threat in itself may be thought to betray doubts among Mr. Benn's left-wing demolitionists that few existing Labour Peers could be relied on to vote for their own extinction, or indeed to support the principle of a unicameral Parliament. Inquiries show the doubts are justified.

Yet in flying to an extreme abolitionist case, Mr. Benn and his henchmen have much history, as well as much left-wing motivation, on their side. Since the Parliament Act, 1911, not a decade has passed without some attempt to reform the House of Lords in terms of either powers or composition, or both: and commonly the call for change has come from the most influential Conservative Peers acting in the Macaulayan principle of "reform that you may preserve". Today, for instance, the leading reformers include Lord Carrington, Foreign Secretary, and Lord Hallam, Lord Chancellor.

That Labour's left always question

reform should cause no surprise anywhere. For the virtue of an unreformed hereditary and nominated House, theoretically twice the size of the elected commons, is that it has popular authority to use the formidable powers it has at call on all except financial Bills, and in that knowledge is customarily willing to be biddable, compromising or temporizing with governments of any colour.

Reform Lords and you will have a different force at large in Parliament and politics generally. All proposals for constitutional change offer, without the addition of a small quota of hereditary peers to keep the hereditary principle alive and so cushion the monarchy.

Such a reformed House of Lords has frightened not only the Labour left but also every leader except Harold Wilson since the war. For it would be the first step towards the re-establishment of the Lords as a rival to and equal of the House of Commons, especially if reforms were backed by direct election based on proportional representation (sav) within the regions of the United Kingdom. That fear has been the stumbling block in all post-war moves by Conservatives to keep within the Constitution a workable and defensible bicameral system in Parliament.

Two big questions must be pre-empted by any serious Labour Party commitment to Lords abolition. First, for the purpose of those wanting to defend the bicameral system, how far is the House of Lords today genuinely capable of using its powers to protect the people against extreme and minority madness? Secondly, what should be, or must be, the immediate response of Mrs. Thatcher and her ministers to an increasing probability of one-chamber government?

The day is unmistakably coming for the Conservative party to begin thinking hard about how to fashion a second chamber that offers real popular protection and that would be reasonably safe against extremist assault for the foreseeable future.

Looking up

From Mr. Robert Pettigrew

Sir, Your report in *The Times* (March 31) describing criticism of the conduct of expeditions mounted by the Royal Geographical Society in the annual report of the Langdale and Ambleside Mountain Rescue Team invites a response.

By the very nature of their part-time calling, members of mountain rescue teams are bound to take a rather gloomy view of the relatively few failures to sustain mountain accidents—they are expert or expert-to-be. It has to be remembered that the major proportion of mountain walkers incur much less risk of accident than the average motorist.

None the less, risk is ever present in mountain and provides precisely the sort of challenge that young people that Prince Philip sought to utilize when he devised the Expedition/Exploration section of his scheme. Few would deny that in a mere quarter century his philosophy has been to promote a better knowledge of mountain-craft and navigational skills among the young aspirants by helping to run training courses of broader content than that old television faithful—stretchers.

Yours faithfully, ROBERT PETTIGREW, Chairman, North East Region, British Mountaineering Council, 4 Tanton Road, Stokely, Cheadle, Cheshire, April 2.

Royal commissions

From Mr. C. Arnold-Baker

Sir, Lord Rothschild, you report, (April 10), thought that each royal commission costs about £1m. Things must have changed since my time, or the term "royal commission" must cover several very dissimilar species.

I was a member of the Jennings Commission on Common Lands. We sat two days a fortnight for three years, heard evidence and read papers from hundreds of people, and travelled all over the country. We were not paid a penny, and our official allowances only barely covered our expenses if we ate in second class restaurants and stayed in second class hotels. We did not complain about this, and do not do so now but, in view of his Lordship's estimate, the facts in one case should be made known. No doubt there are others.

Yours faithfully, CHARLES ARNOLD-BAKER, 2, Paper Buildings, Temple, ECA.

Lessons of Bristol riot

From Mr. Richard Smerdon

Sir, Although fortunate to live now in North Somerset, I have worked in Bristol for over 10 years, and lived for approximately one year in the middle of the St Paul's area with the family of one of the priests-in-charge of a St Paul's parish.

I think that what happened in St Paul's (April 2) should provoke the most serious reflection not only by the Bristol authorities, but also by this Government.

Without doubt, the riot was not racial. Race relations in Bristol are, on the whole, remarkably good, and a large number of men and women (including representatives of the police) have dedicated years of their lives to develop harmonious race relations.

The riot did, however, reflect an outpouring of rage and frustration by a large number of young unemployed people (most of whom are black, but many white) who inevitably have nothing to do all day except frequenting the pubs and bars where they are easy prey to alcohol and drug trafficking. It was therefore predictable that when with hindsight a quite extraordinarily heavy-handed raid by police on one of these "sanctuaries" was made the indignation of a few immediate onlookers and occupants would quickly spread to a hysterical riot in a spontaneous outburst of fury.

The St Paul's area, like several others in Bristol, has been the victim of municipal devastation as a

result of motorway building. It will take years before these areas re-establish a sense of solid stability. Fortunately there is reason to believe that the local authorities now recognize the folly of the manner in which the devastation was caused and are allocating more resources as far as they can in these hard times to these deprived areas.

It is to be hoped that the riot will lead to a complete reappraisal of methods of policing in this area. However, there are at least two fundamentally important national issues which it is of the utmost importance for this Administration to act on before it is too late.

1. Unemployment among youngsters (in many cases for years and years until all hope is gone) is a tragic waste of human beings. This Government appears to be content with pitiless indifference the plight of the unemployed. It will cost money to promote schemes to create jobs—yes, taxpayers' money: but would it be willingly taxed for this objective?

2. Community relations are not just the numbers game which this Government appears to be obsessed with. It is a matter of constant, positive endeavour and appropriate resources applied by thoughtful and thoughtful men and women with the positive encouragement of municipal and government authorities.

Yours faithfully, RICHARD SMERDON, St Cross, Greendown, Liton, Bath, April 3.

Human rights in Britain

From Mr. Francis Bennion

Sir, I write to counter a slur cast on Mr. Fred Silvester, MP, by Lord De L'Isle of the Freedom Association. In his letter of April 8, Lord De L'Isle makes the unworthy suggestion that Mr. Silvester's opposition to the European Convention on Human Rights is simply due to his apprehension, as a junior Employment Minister, of being caught in *flagrante delicto* by a forthcoming adverse decision under the Convention.

That this suggestion is unfounded can be proved from my own columns. As long ago as February 6, 1978, you published a letter from

Mr. Silvester supporting one I had written about the undemocratic nature of the Convention. Mr. Silvester, who was then an Opposition back-bencher, said in the course of a lengthy, reasoned analysis that the Convention "covers subjects of a highly political nature." He went on: "The great majority lie in an area which most people would regard as the proper business of Parliament or local councils rather than 13 unelected foreign judges."

All that Mr. Silvester is guilty of is consistency. Yours sincerely, FRANCIS BENNION, 24 St Aubyn's, Hove, East Sussex.

Centre for industry and science

From Mr. Philip F. Nind

Sir, One important activity with which the new Centre for Analysis of Technical Change (Catch) will have to be closely involved is not mentioned by your Science Editor in his article today (April 8). If the first problem is to close the gap between academic research and the science-based industries, the actual "mating of scientific knowledge with industry" is a management task and responsibility. Therefore the centre should include not only scientists, engineers, economists and lawyers, but also managers and management scientists who are already experienced in bringing the academic and business worlds closer together and in coordinating a coordination of functions which is the hallmark of successful management. Technological innovation within a business demands a high order of efficiency in production techniques, budgeting and cash flow, market research, and human relations—as Dr. R. C. Parker has recently shown at Ashridge Management College.

A strong case can be made for Catch at one of our several universities which have a flourishing management school. But if not, perhaps it would be pertinent for its first director to be a management scientist who is familiar with the problems of coordinating research with the downstream activities of production and marketing—above all with the human problems which change inevitably entails. Yours faithfully, PHILIP NIND, Director, Foundation for Management Education, Management House, Parker Street, WC2, April 8.

Nuclear arms threat

From Professor Sir Joseph Hutchinson, FRS

Sir, When Sir Gilbert Longden (April 7) wrote that "the rulers of the Soviet Union are continuing regardless to pile up arms and armaments far beyond those necessary for defence," did he know something that Lord Zuckerman (January 21) did not know when he wrote quivering the views of senior American nuclear advisers on defence? "that any analysis of the predictions that have been made of the Soviet military threat over the past 20 years will show that they have always been far-fetched?"

The secrecy surrounding military "intelligence," weapons research, and armament manufacture makes it easy for those who are afraid of their neighbours to follow the dictates of their worst fears. Must we sit down under this? Who is working on our behalf to put some sense of purpose and of urgency into the hopelessly expedient "time management" of the Disarmament Conference?

The Minister of Defence is loud and insistent in his claims for the means to counter the threats that his military advisers fear. Can he not have a Minister of Defence who will explore these threats and the conflicts that beset us, and work openly and with dedication to resolve them? A government that worked its way through the Rhodesian impasse from Lusaka to Lancaster House and on to the Rhodesian elections is not without the qualities of determination, flexibility and persistence necessary to undertake such a task—if it has the will. Or are we afraid to attempt such an enterprise? One of the options Mr. Thatcher (April 7) put before us is oblivion. If it comes to that, perhaps our epitaph might be: "They failed because they were afraid to try."

Yours faithfully, JOSEPH HUTCHINSON, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, April 8.

Through customs

From Mr. J. T. Hughes

Sir, Would someone please explain to me why our customs officers are prepared to allow into the country French milk for the purpose of an anti-British demonstration, which according to your report (April 2) is contrary to the regulations regarding this commodity, whilst confiscating a few potatoes I had in my possession on return from a Continental holiday, and which were to form the basis of my evening meal?

Yours faithfully, J. T. HUGHES, Twin Oaks, Oak Farm Lane, Fairseat, Sevenoaks, Kent.

Knowing one's place

From Mrs John Greenhalgh

Sir, "The means test, with its likely cut-off point at around £8,000 income, will ensure that it helps only the lower paid," wrote Ronald Butt in his article on the new managed assisted places scheme (April 3).

As a "disadvantaged" person, a role of which I was hitherto ignorant until Mr. Butt's analysis, I look forward—along with the majority of the population on £8,000—minus income—to the next Conservative budget and the endless subsidies and benefits that await us all, the new poor.

Yours sincerely, EDNA GREENHALGH, 85 Chester Row, SW1.

Made in England

From Mrs Francis Dillon

Sir, Beryl Dowling's article (April 5) prompts me to tell you that in 1929 I purchased a cast aluminium omelette pan made in England. A tag attached to it read "Guaranteed to last a lifetime." It has been and still is in constant use: it will probably outlive me, and my memory, stuck to it and have been much commended.

It cost either one guinea or 22 shillings and sixpence and I regarded it as an extravagance. Yours sincerely, TANIA DILLON, 17 Orchard Place, Arundel, Sussex.

A Times Profile

No future but beggary for a master of film

A week of Soviet films begins today at the National Film Theatre in London. Significantly absent from the season is work by Sarkis Paradjanov—also known as Sergei Paradjanov, the Russian version of his name—an Armenian film director thought by some to be the finest Soviet film maker. He fell foul of the Soviet authorities in 1974, was sentenced to five years in a strict regime labour colony and has not been allowed to make films since.

Paradjanov, who made *Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors* and *The Colour of Pomegranates*, was convicted of homosexuality—in fact for non-conformism—after being cleared of an unsubstantiated charge of trafficking in objects d'art. He was released after four years following an international campaign organized on his behalf. We met him in Tbilisi.

Having made our way through a confusing maze of houses, we found ourselves looking up at a strange balcony. At the top of a narrow iron staircase, Paradjanov was sitting alone, motionless. He greeted us with a broad bearded smile: "Ah! you have come from France? You have come to take me away with you!"

We were shown into a small, dark and uncomfortable room. The walls were covered with engravings, paintings, photographs and pieces of embroidery. This was Paradjanov's home; he was embarrassed to receive us in such humble surroundings.

Paradjanov understands Armenian, but he does not speak it very well. He repeatedly asked whether we were "real" Armenians and flitted from one subject to another, referring for instance to his neighbour who could have had a successful career as an actress. His eyes were alert and he displayed an eloquent range of facial expressions. Our fears about his state of health were quickly dispelled. He seemed to be in perfect physical condition.

After a few minutes he got up to lead us on to the balcony. "I am not allowed to work, so I just mess about." What he had to show us was a fresco, richly coloured, made of pieces of cloth, paper and other odds and ends. It was a stylized representation of a man and woman in

traditional costume—entitled *Zankhazour Dance*.

We asked if he knew why he was arrested.

"I do not understand. I am an undesirable. I am a nuisance to everyone. I had already been arrested once before, in the Ukraine. I had been accused of being a Ukrainian nationalist because I had refused to dub a film in Russian. My reason for refusing was the dubbing would have debased and vulgarized the meaning of the words and distorted the effect of the images."

On that occasion, in fact, the Ukrainians tried to use me. They claimed that I was defending their ethnic culture and language. They acclaimed me because my son attended a Ukrainian school. All my problems started at that time. The former Ukrainian president was my friend. When he was dismissed, all his friends became worried.

When I had completed filming *The Colour of Pomegranates* I went back to Kiev to be with my son, who was sick. They took the opportunity to arrest me. The intensity of their malevolence was quite overwhelming. You must understand that I am not a dissident and that I feel clean.

For the purposes of the prosecution I was a criminal, a thief, an anti-Soviet agitator... They even looked inside my body for gold. Then they trumped up a charge of homosexuality and that was the crime for which I was tried. I was alleged to have raped a member of the Party and to have perverted an old lady of eighty with a pornographic pen.

They mobilized six prosecutors to establish my guilt. "One year in prison is not enough for you," they said. "You will serve a sentence of five years, which will be enough to exterminate you."

Paradjanov spoke with spirit. Very much on his merits, he displayed a fine sense of humour, talking with complete confidence and without a hint of bitterness. He told his story quite uncomplainingly, but with a liveliness suggesting his great determination.

He opened his photograph album and showed us his mother, his wife and his son. Turning a page, he came to a photograph taken at the prison camp, a group of prisoners with Paradjanov surrounded by criminals.

"They sentenced me to be detained in a labour camp. After the trial I was shunted from prison to prison because of none of them wanted a 'criminal' of my sort. I was put in with murderers and misfits of all sorts. Just look at the photo: this man murdered and ate his mother; here we have a group of homosexuals who have dressed in women's clothes to amuse the prison warders in the hope of being given a few cigarettes."

The years in prison were the most important time of my life so far. Isolation is an extraordinary phenomenon. I could now write a thesis on the pathological problems that it causes. My life without that experience would be no more than a mirage. Someone who is not creative, a painter, writer or artist, cannot derive anything from such isolation, from which human sensations are shut out.

"I should make a study of the fear and jealousy of these men who can never get out, and write about it. In that world I was a suspect stranger. The prisoners could squat on their haunches without moving for hours on end. I cannot keep still for a minute."

They tried to exterminate me because I was different. They thought that I was making fun of them. In the end, though, they accepted and adopted me. I bore them a grudge for beating me up and injuring me, but I am grateful to them for helping me to discover a world.

All the great films are as nothing compared to prison camp life. If one is a poet, one can create under these conditions. The prisoners managed to get paper for me; I wrote a hundred short stories and six screenplays. I became their confessor. They told me about their crimes, their loves, their sex lives; they would come to speak to the 'philosopher'.

I have realized that, under certain conditions, confession as invented by religion really has a purpose and usefulness. I could certainly make a film based



Sarkis Paradjanov

on this experience, a film on man as animal. I remember one prisoner who said to me when he heard I was to be released: 'You will miss us'.

I painted eight hundred pictures, with coal or anything that came to hand, using bits of cloth or jute. Those pictures mean a lot to me. I may be wrong, but I think they have great value. I should like them to be seen. I taught the prisoners to paint, draw and make collages. Since my release some of them have written to me; they wonder whether I have not played a dirty trick on them by teaching them the value of beauty.

I should like my paintings to be safe. I do not want to sell them. I would prefer to give them away, to offer them to the people who have defended me, to my friends in France or to the people who wrote 'Free Paradjanov' on the walls of the Paris Metro.

Every morning I go out to look for work, along with the other misfits. When people see my diplomas they are afraid. Of course I could sell flowers, but that is not my trade. Why should I do it?

I live in this house, which belongs to my family. There is no water and I am embarrassed that I cannot receive people more decently. I survive by gradually selling off all my possessions, everything which has come from my family; my mother's silver, the paintings on the walls, the carpets and the pieces of embroidery that remain will all soon be sold.

When I have nothing left to sell I shall go out begging. I have already done it once and made four roubles in a day; that is enough to live off for four days. The neighbours are very generous, they help a lot.

People get the impression that because I am distributing all my possessions I am getting ready to die. But I am already a dead man. I cannot live without creating. I still have a lot of things to do. I should like to make a film about Ara Kaghitzig (an Armenian king) or David Sasunsky (an Armenian hero). In prison, my life had meaning, there was a reality to overcome. My present life is devoid of value. I am not afraid of death, but this life is worse than death.

I have knocked on all the doors. In Armenia many people are prepared to help me, but when I have an appointment with a minister he suddenly takes a

months' leave. Of course I am Catholic as well (the Patriarch of Armenia), but all he can do is make a cassock. The Armenians themselves too much harm by bold enough. It is time they fear behind them.

Today I no longer have the cannot bear inactivity, I cannot I out working. Here I am not allow any creative work. I have to get quickly as possible. I should like France, my country of adoption, owe the French a great deal, they can help me. I am relying because I do not wish to leave honest means.

I am aware of the difficulties for me. I cannot be certain that immediately find inspiration in I and I would not like the French me to start making marvellous soon as I arrived. My roots are I have no choice, I have to leave.

I have a film about Krikor in my head; it would show the ecumenism, and evoke the atmosphere of Armenia in the Middle Ages. The life story of Komitas (a monk, deported in 1915) fills me with admiration. If I were to make a film, it would be a very short film of ballet about a destiny. His passion in which music is the achievement.

I would take decades before Soviet cinema allowed such film made. As for my projects for Ara Kaghitzig and David Sasunsky, will no doubt remain dreams. That historical reconstitution expensive, but to make a great I not necessary resort to fallacious extravagant buffoonery which set to conceal the superficial character Take War and Peace for instance the voice of the people.

When I think of the paucity of affection of today's off whether in music, dancing, art, painting or the cinema, I feel like because I know how much great extraordinary strength there is ancient Armenian nation. Today been reduced to a policy which creativity, against all aesthetic. All we see is a middle class which fills me with pity.

Some great names still stand. ever. They produce masterpieces public know nothing about their artists are lone figures, beacon surrounding trees in a forest occur. A high price has to be paid freedom to create. The buff, gorging themselves while the re are dying in the midst of gene ference.

It will take years for resembling a movement to emerge can only be isolated efforts. present, people go on extolling tues of the Museum of Modern Erevan, but Europeans would in its exhibits as modern at all generations may be even more in towards great and courageous in will probably also be more cyclic

This interview first appeared in L

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Steel corporation borrowing limit is to be lifted to £5,500m

By Peter Hill
Industrial Editor

The British Steel Corporation's statutory borrowing limit is to be raised to £5,500m as a result of measures to be introduced by the Government within the next few weeks.

The present limit which was set at £4,750m in the summer of 1978 will be raised by £750m, a move believed necessary because the corporation, which is now recovering from the 13-week strike, is in danger of exceeding this figure.

At the end of the 1978-79 financial year total BSC borrowings against the limit were £3,100m, but last year's borrowings against the cash limit of £700m and the £450m external financing arrange-ment set for the new financial year would push total borrowings to £4,600m.

The corporation's financing by the Government has been complicated by the strike which added £10m a week to losses already running at £7m a week before the strike began. The final loss for the last financial year is expected to be nearly £450m.

This year the corporation is faced with a tough cash limit of £450m and a requirement to meet the government-set objective of reaching a financial breakeven point by the end of next March. This is seen as a near-impossible task and the corporation will almost certainly seek some relaxation from the Government.

But despite the strike the corporation has managed to remain within last year's cash limit. After talks with ministers the Government has agreed that the corporation should be allowed to carry over £150m from last year's external financing requirement to the new financial year to meet bills which went unpaid because of a strike by clerical staff.

Next year the move has been made, however, on the understanding that the money will be used for that purpose alone.

Provision was made in the original legislation in 1978 for further upward revision but the move requires resolution from Parliament, and it is expected that the steel industry's problems will be the subject of



Sir Keith Joseph: debate likely on industry's problems.

a debate when Sir Keith Joseph, the Secretary of State for Industry, introduces the lifting of the borrowing ceiling.

It is expected that the setting of the new limit will coincide with new and stricter monitoring of the corporation's finances which were to have been implemented from the middle of last month but their introduction has been delayed because of the disruption caused by the strike.

The new controls are designed to reinforce the Government's insistence that public funds should not be used to finance losses. Discussions are also taking place on covering losses through disposal of assets, and the reduction of physical stocks.

This year, according to the Government's White Paper on public spending, the corporation will spend £184m on capital investment but the investment spending programme for the next three years has still to be determined.

Future spending plans will be concerned with improving quality of the steel the corporation produces and provision has been made for the introduction of continuously cast steel facilities at Port Talbot in South Wales and at the Stocksbridge and Templeborough works near Sheffield.

Report points to bad haulage management

By Michael Bally
Transport Correspondent

Road hauliers are suffering from lack of financial control, especially in collecting payment from customers, according to a new study out today.

The report by Inter Company Comparisons, a survey of 99 hauliers, it comments that competent management is scarce in the haulage industry. Many hauliers allow 70 days payment, more than double the time set by most credit controllers.

"Hauliers seem to have a tradition of not pressing customers for payment, just as manufacturers are loath ever to settle a transport account," the report says.

Although many other companies are equally lax, often fear of losing a regular customer, hauliers must be hit particularly badly in days of high interest rates by their generosity when so many of their own outgoings are

weekly. If hauliers are to survive another two years of economic stringency they must concentrate more on this kind of basic principle of manage-ment.

The survey shows that independent haulage companies perform better than subsidiaries of large groups. ICC attributes this partly to tendency of the conglomerates to acquire costly overheads, and partly because of the likelihood of financial support from the parent company if the haulier ran into difficulties.

Independents showed an average return on capital last year of 24.6 per cent compared with 13.2 per cent for subsidiaries. Average profit per employee was £1,235 for independents and £61 for subsidiaries. Independents also paid their employees more—an average of £4,041 compared with £3,887.

Road Hauliers: An Industry Sector Analysis. Inter Company Comparisons Ltd, 81 City Road, London EC1Y 1BD, £80.

Air Europe applies for flights to Miami

By Arthur Reed
Air Correspondent

Air Europe, the Gatwick-based package holiday airline, is in the market for leased wide-bodied jets of the Boeing 747, jumbo or McDonnell Douglas DC10 type with which to operate a scheduled service between London and Miami.

Later, provided that the Civil Aviation Authority grants it the licence to operate to Miami, Air Europe plans to buy its own wide-bodied jets. The airline's application to fly the Miami route in competition with British Airways is to be heard by the authority in London next week.

It will be strongly opposed

by Laker Airways which has its own application before the authority. A third, Gatwick-based airline, British Caledonian, withdrew its application for a Miami route licence because it will be opening other services this year to the southern United States and Hong Kong.

Under the terms of the Bermuda North Atlantic air services agreement, Britain and the United States are each allowed to have two airlines flying between Miami and London.

Mr Martin O'Regan, Air Europe's chief executive, announced today a pre-tax profit of just over £1m for the 16-month period between July 1978, when the company was incorporated, and October last year.

The airline began flying in May 1979, and up to October had generated £8m revenue from 135,000 passengers on 1,200 flights, mainly to holiday resorts around the Mediter-ranean.

Air Europe now has a fleet of five Boeing 737-200 aircraft, with a sixth on order for delivery in the spring of 1981 when the value of the fleet will stand at £36m. It is contracted to carry 300,000 passengers during the current financial year.

GEC fights for £20m radar order

By Kenneth Owen
Technology Editor

A last-minute attempt to prevent the Civil Aviation Authority placing an order for air traffic control radar systems worth more than £20m has been made by GEC-Marconi and Plesey Radar.

The authority said yesterday that no decision had yet been taken on the choice of supplier, but a GEC/Plesey source confirmed that the two companies had been informed in writing that their joint bid had been rejected.

The announcement of the contract award has been expected since January. Last-minute efforts by GEC to prevent the order going abroad are believed to include an attempt to submit a further bid this time without Plesey involvement.

Last January Mr Frank Chorley, managing director of Plesey Electronic Systems (which includes the radar company), said it seemed likely the authority's order would go to American Westinghouse company. More recently it has been unofficially

reported that the Dutch company Signaal, a member of the Philips group, has become the favoured choice.

The decision by the Civil Aviation Authority to go to international tender was taken last year, after separate bids by Plesey and by GEC-Marconi had been judged unacceptable.

The main requirement is for radar equipment to handle the en-route control of civil aircraft in eastern and south-eastern England. Control in the airport areas is also included.

Mr Chorley said in January the overall requirement was a very difficult one to meet. It appeared that Westinghouse (and now presumably Signaal) had an off-the-shelf system which even if it did not meet the complete specification was at least available, while the design proposed by the two British companies would need further development.

The British proposal, also, was apparently more expensive than the competing bids.

Mr Chorley had argued that there was a danger that the orders might be placed with foreign companies which would offer the cheapest immediate solution but which would damage the credibility of United Kingdom companies in export markets generally.

In the case of the authority's order, he said, a possible immediate advantage to the authority of perhaps £2m would be put at risk overseas orders worth £200m a year for Plesey and GEC-Marconi in the future.

At least two unions—the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Staffs section) and the Electrical Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union—have in recent weeks urged the Government to bear in mind the interests of the British companies.

Members of Parliament sponsored by the EETPU will be trying to introduce an early-day motion deploring the attitude of the authority's own that the Commons has resumed after the Easter recess.

So far the view of Mr John Nott, Secretary of State for Trade, has been that the Government should not interfere in the Civil Aviation Authority's decision-making.

Though Mr Chorley and other Plesey directors were arguing strongly for the GEC/Plesey solution while it was still a contender, the Plesey view now is to go to the authority to reject this solution must be accepted. The company says it is very disap-

pointed at this rejection, but it accepts the situation. GEC, by contrast, appears to be willing to fight to the bitter end in the hope of overturning the authority's decision.

Broadly, the division of the air traffic control radar work between GEC-Marconi and Plesey in their joint bid would have included Plesey concentrating on the "active" elements such as the dish aerials; and Marconi on the processing part of the system.

One reason for such a relatively small-value contract producing such a controversial argument is that it could be relevant to a much larger order on the way for similar equipment.

This is for a substantial series of orders for between 60 and 70 Nato radar units, including a first order which would be for a station in the United Kingdom. The Ministry of Defence has opted for Nato funding for this and other systems.

Since the bidding is now subject to the open-tendering rules of Nato, the danger, as seen by the British companies, is that if the first station were to go to a foreign company the prospects for United Kingdom firms in later bidding would be jeopardized.

Fall in new public housing forecast

By Patricia Tisdall
Management Correspondent

A 25 per cent drop in new public sector construction work by 1981 is the forecast made by the National Council of Building Material Producers today. The biggest drop is expected to be in public housing where the forecast levels of starts at 60,000 in 1980 and 55,000 in 1981 are the lowest levels since the last war.

Decreases are also expected in non-housing public sector construction work because of the shortage of finance, and in the case of the non-housing industry, the difficulties in meeting tough targets for borrowing.

The report which has been compiled by the forecasting panel of the council, considers that private housebuilding is likely to suffer in the short term but to recover in 1981.

The panel believes that there will be a strong underlying demand for homes arising from the changing structure of population. This will create market and other pressures for increasing the total number of homes being built over the next few years.

Its forecast for the total number of housing starts for 1980 is 185,000 and 200,000 in the following year. Of this, it expects 125,000 and 145,000 being in the private sector.

Industrial building is expected to suffer setbacks in the next two years. The tax changes announced in the Budget, which increased initial allowances on small factories and the proposed enterprise zones, were welcomed as a useful stimulus.

However, their full impact is not thought to be felt by the construction industry until after 1981. The forecast is that industrial building output would be up by 5 per cent in 1980 and a further 10 per cent in 1981.

A somewhat more stable outlook is forecast for private commercial construction work. The panel felt that the rising trend experienced during the last three years was sufficient given enough work "in the pipeline" to give some stability despite a recent decline in new orders.

There was in addition considerable new investment coming from insurance companies and pension fund operators. As a result it forecasts only small decreases in this sector of 1 per cent in 1980 and 3 per cent for 1981.

Seagram to sell its US oil and gas interests in \$2,300m deal

From Frank Vogl
Washington, April 13

Seagram's of Canada has signed a letter of intent with the Sun company of Pennsylvania to sell all of its United States oil and gas interests for \$2,300m (£1,100m). In addition to this purchase price Sun says it is willing to make up to \$400m in capital expenditure commitment on these Seagram interests.

The two companies announced that they have set themselves an April 25 deadline to reach a definitive agreement on the deal.

When Sun first announced its bid last week for Texas Pacific Oil and Gas Company, a fully-owned Seagram's subsidiary, the Canadian company saw that other oil firms were also interested in its energy subsidiary. But late on Friday evening,

several hours after Sun's initial deadline for a Seagram response had passed, the two companies stated that a firm deal was in the making.

This is one of the largest transfers of assets in north America. At stake are the American holdings and activities of Texas Pacific. The company has a United States oil output of 35,000 barrels and gas output of 130 million cubic feet.

It has proven reserves in the United States of 120 million barrels of oil and 300,000 million cubic feet of gas. It also has three million acres of unexplored land in America.

Seagram's is one of the large energy and oil companies in Canada and Texas Pacific is its sole venture in the energy business. Not included in this deal are modest Texas Pacific interests in Canada and its holdings in the Gulf of Thailand.

Apart from the handsome price, it appears that what financed the deal was Sun's offer to provide Seagram's with a continuing interest in the United States oil and gas business. The new letter of intent states that when certain conditions are fulfilled, 49 per cent of the unexplored Texas Pacific land and 25 per cent of Texas Pacific's output will revert to Seagram's control.

The companies did not disclose details of these conditions, but it is believed that they focus on Sun's ability to recover from Texas Pacific operations its initial outlay of \$2,300m plus the \$400m in capital commitments.

The letter of intent noted that the \$2,300m is to be paid to Seagram's in cash or in a combination of cash and floating rate notes.

Belgian Government resignation worsens economic prospects

By Peter Norman
In Brussels

The likelihood of a prolonged government crisis in Belgium comes at a time when the country's economic prospects are worse than at any point since the recession of 1975.

Last week's resignation of the government of Mr Wilfried Martens coincided with a spate of reports about the economy that have been almost wholly bad.

The most dramatic came this weekend from the finance ministry. According to provisional figures Belgium's current account balance of payments deficit widened to 113,600m francs (about £1,665m) last year, from 28,300m francs the year before.

These figures, which were far worse than recent forecasts had suggested, followed a warning from the economic ministry the day before that the present high level of interest rates in Belgium, with the bank rate at 14 per cent, could bring on a recession by dealing a severe blow to investment, production, employment and private consumption.

Earlier in the week, Societe Generale de Banque had published its latest monthly review, estimating real economic growth at only 1.5 per cent

compared with a forecast of 2.2 per cent a few months ago.

The absence of a government is threatening legislation to control the state's spending, resulting in fears that the deficit on current operations alone could expand to 120,000m francs this year, from the 82,000m planned.

Concern is also mounting about the future of the Belgian franc, which after coming under heavy pressure in the first 10 weeks of this year, has been kept off its threshold of divergence in the European monetary system by two-figure interest rate levels at a time when inflation is running at only 6 per cent.

The monthly report of the economic ministry was unusual in that it chose to look beyond the present statistical picture of economic activity in Belgium and diagnose underlying trends. It found that despite some recovery last year, the investment was still depressed.

It complained that consumer demand was concentrated on the durable goods sector and, although exports appeared to be doing well, Belgium was not selling enough to developing countries and "growth" markets.

In its report, the Societe Generale de Banque said that both domestic demand and exports would grow in 1980 at a slower rate than in 1979.

Bankers in dollar dilemma

From Peter Norman
Brussels, April 13

Western central bankers will tomorrow have a first opportunity to discuss last week's sharp decline in the value of the dollar on foreign exchange markets.

At this month's regular meeting of central bankers in Basel, the representatives of the United States' partners in the Group of Ten and Switzerland will be anxious to hear whether the United States Federal Reserve Board believes the turnaround is anything more than a technical reaction to the dollar's earlier strong gains.

The central bank governors will have another opportunity to study the reports on the Euro-currency markets prepared by their experts over the past year. The studies, which were commissioned a year ago, as a gentlemanly way of muzzling American proposals for minimum reserve requirements on the Euro-currency markets, have placed the central bankers in a dilemma.

On the one hand, the problem of the vastly increased Opec surpluses this year means that the bankers are unwilling to do or say anything that might upset the effectiveness of the Euro-market as a recycling instrument. On the other, the studies apparently lend support to some of the anxieties felt by the Americans about the rapid growth of the Euro-markets in recent years.

Television programme may jeopardize lucrative trade Threat to new Saudi contracts

British companies trading with Saudi Arabia are keeping a low profile until they determine whether last week's "Death of a Princess" television programme has had any serious lasting effect on British exports.

It was an unexpected blow to companies already suffering the consequences of developments in the Soviet Union and Iran. Saudi Arabia will be announcing its £125,000m development plan for 1980-85 soon and Britain was expected to have a good opportunity to increase exports.

Total exports to the Soviet Union, Iran and Saudi Arabia last year were worth more than £1,500m. Sales to the Russians fell in 1979 to £419m, a slight drop in value terms from the previous year's £423m but a serious decrease in real terms. Exports to Iran fell by £500m to £232m.

Soviet purchases are largely geared to big project contracts and Russia has already shown its displeasure over the strong Anglo-American stance on Afghanistan by awarding the first in a series of large contracts to the French.

Wimpey, BP and Brown & Root formed an Anglo-American consortium that looked certain

to win a \$118m (£55m) order for a complex to build offshore drilling rigs, having proved their technology in the tough conditions of the North Sea's Forties field.

The French technology was almost untapped; the French are expected now to get more orders in a programme which will be worth \$24,000m (£11,000m), over the next 10 years.

If Britain accepts President Carter's deadline for sanctions against Iran, another long-standing British contract would almost certainly be lost: supplying car kits of the old Hillman Hunter model, used largely in Iran and assembled locally.

Trade with Saudi Arabia is more complex, and is satisfied by work in thousands of factories. It was worth £894m last year, increasing by 14 per cent on the previous year, but Britain has not won many contracts in valuable big construction work. Saudi Arabia's development plan between 1980 and 1985 will be worth \$270,000m (£125,000m) to be spent should have given British exporters a big opportunity to increase sales.

British exports to Saudi Arabia fall into five categories, led by machinery and transport

equipment (£490m), non-metallic manufactured goods (£135m), miscellaneous manufactured goods (£98m), chemicals (£80m), and food (£45m).

With the emphasis under the new five-year plan expected to switch to furnishing recently completed plant, British companies were confident of much increased sales.

The sales manager of one company, employing just 35 people, said yesterday: "We are expecting to do about £1m worth of business in Saudi Arabia this year, and we can only hope that the whole thing blows over very quickly."

Another British company, with a representative office in Riyadh, said: "We have told our people to keep a fairly low profile, and we expect to be able to judge the mood of the Saudi Arabians in the next week or so."

The view of industry generally is that the makers of television fiction-documentaries should weigh the consequences more carefully, because they do not have to return to countries in which exporters have to have a constant presence.

John Lawless

SAMUEL OSBORN & CO., LIMITED

Notice is hereby given of the appointment of Lloyds Bank Limited as Registrar.

All documents for registration and correspondence should in future be sent to the address below:

KENNETH SIDDALL, F.C.I.S.
Secretary



Lloyds Bank Limited,
Registrars Department,
Goring-by-Sea,
Worthing, West Sussex BN12 6DA.
Telephone: Worthing 502541
(STD code 0903)

Lloyds Bank Limited

THE POUND

Bank	Bank	Bank	Bank
buys	sells	buys	sells
\$ 2.07	2.08	Norway Kr 11.52	11.02
£ 30.65	28.90	Portugal Esc 112.00	106.00
¥ 71.30	67.80	South Africa Rd 1.55	1.75
₣ 2.63	2.56	Spain Pta 159.00	152.00
₡ 13.25	12.70	Sweden Kr 9.90	9.50
₣ 8.70	8.30	Switzerland Fr 4.02	3.80
₣ 9.20	8.40	US \$ 2.24	2.18
DM 4.30	4.08	Yugoslavia Dnr 52.00	49.00
₣ 90.50	86.50		
₣ 11.20	10.75		
₣ 12.12	11.08		
₣ 1970.00	1875.00		
₣ 575.00	550.00		
₣ 4.70	4.47		

Notes for small denomination bank notes only, as supplied by Barclays Bank International Ltd. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques and other foreign currency business.

BY THE FINANCIAL EDITOR

Early Spring for gilts?

been too many false dawns in the market. As early as last year, when pushed to 14 per cent, there were some large discount houses, it could not last, made the market a good deal of money. King a case for gilts now better not only because of past excesses but because the lifting of control has added weight to the surging interest rates on the dollar eased last week and this will have a terling rates.

are now that demand for money is rising. Admittedly, the government's borrowing requirements and in isolation this could be a bearish factor for gilts. It looks as if other advanced gilts market are beginning to show lower interest rates and higher prices. After last week's banking system to keep as low as it looks that unless there are other factors which will not be working factors suggest that the value of borrowings is easing off. are certainly running down as much as possible and within a month the corporate sector should be in a recession in the offing. The gains, however, how quickly and how much of 1977 rates on long gilts by three points in the short months and left timely buyers of around 30 per cent. This year exceptional and several limit the fall this time, but sharp movement could leave day's levels with tidy capital at very little risk.

uld a short-lived bull market emerge during or after the unstable corporate demand for be on again and any major rates will quickly bring about this issues which will drain off liquidity from money markets. ication now that exchange conf is the attraction of fixed s in other markets. For those institutions with no major commitments dabbling in the fixed interest market—or even r but higher yielding dollar—could bring rewards not only ins due to a fall in rates but rds of a strengthening dollar. e, the element of speculation case be far greater.

ding on of ue orning shareholders in Assam dings), are due to meet to tions proposing, inter-alia, air e issue share capital of their the process of acquiring two panies. Before they give their s are one or two matters to ould direct their attention. nts for the diversification into e on the directors' belief that ce on McLeod Russel should y the development of other the directors acknowledge ie proposed acquisitions the .H. will initially continue to ly on the results of McLeod

per cent of the voting capital controlled by two directors of Messrs John Malcolm Guthrie Guthrie—and by a company m and their associates, Broad e. One of the two property be acquired by Assam—Lear o owned by Broadland. County Properties—is associa dland in four developments. e potential conflict of interest e and Guthrie, and Broadland e not to cast their votes at G.M.

good. There are two areas to of the shareholders (inclu durance, which has a 3.3 per the company) should be direct-

ing their attention: the ownership of Assam, should the acquisition go through, and the price that is to be paid.

As to the former, following the acquisitions Broadland and its associates (ie the Guthries) will earn 64.8 per cent of the voting capital. The company has already been reclassified as a close company and presumably on the argument that Guthrie interests have control already, the Takeover Panel is not imposing the requirement for a general offer under Rule 34 of the City Code.

The second question—that of the price to be paid for Learmonth and County—is the more important and the more complicated. Apart from a payment of £130,000 in cash for County's convertible participating preference shares, it is to be satisfied by the issue of shares in Assam.

Now, while Learmonth (which is involved in investing in and developing property in Scotland and the north of England) is being acquired at net asset value of £1.88m (after allowing for contingent capital gains liabilities and adding in profits for the year to end March, 1980); considerably more than net asset value is being paid for County. Including the £130,000 in cash being paid for the preference shares, the total amounts to £467,500 against asset value of £191,000.

Of course, the effects are reflected in net asset value. Allowing for the holdings in McLeod Russel at directors' valuation (£3.23m, equivalent to market value at end-March, 1976, plus subsequent additions at cost plus Assam's share of retained profits), net asset value would improve from 47.9p to 51.2p on the acquisitions. But Assam's stake in McLeod Russel was worth £5.55m in the market, on the date that the property acquisitions were announced; and allowing for that valuation, net asset value would fall from 86.4p per Assam share to 75.1p following the acquisitions.

It is by no means unusual for public companies to issue shares at a market price well below net asset value, but then few public companies hold their assets in a form so readily realizable as this clutch of McLeod Russel shares. Nor is it unusual for public companies to issue their shares to shareholders at a hefty discount to net asset value in the hope of earnings to come—it happens on every rights issue.

But then, the shares issued by most companies by way of rights are available to all shareholders on the same terms, whether or not they choose to take them up. Those to be issued by Assam for Learmonth (and County) will be available only to those shareholders who have an interest in those companies.

Diversification may be desirable: but shareholders ought to inquire whether this is the way to set about it.

Amstrad

Not quite like anything else

The offer-for-sale price of 85p for shares in Amstrad Consumer Electronics looks fairly pricey. On the forecast 43 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £1.5m in the year to June 30 the prospective fully-taxed p/e is 12.7 and the shares are being offered by Kleinwort Benson on a yield of 5.5 per cent. The hi-fi market is fiercely competitive and fashions change fast. This year promises to be a very tough one and given the present condition of the stockmarket, Amstrad must clearly have something special to offer to warrant this kind of rating.

The marketing skills are those of founder, chairman and controlling shareholder, Mr Alan Sugar. Flexible production methods involving a combination of own manufacture, sub-contracting and imports from the Far East help Amstrad to undercut the competition.

Amstrad has no debt, despite its rapid growth which has seen sales rising by nearly half to £5.6m in the two years to June, 1979, and then run out at £4.8m in the following six months.

So despite the demanding rating, and barring a stockmarket collapse, the shares could well open at a premium when dealings start. But how long Amstrad can maintain its growth and keep a step ahead in such a volatile industry is a question to be borne in mind.

Washington
America's banks lead the world in sophistication in international business, but domestically the industry could be said to be still in the dark ages.

Now, far-reaching changes are at last taking place. They should make the biggest United States banks even more competitive and increase their profitability on the world stage still further. They should also extend the Federal Reserve System's ability to control America's money supply, as well as providing the consumer with better services from the banks.

Many foreign banking companies with headquarters in other countries are also directly affected. More than 300 foreign banks operate in the United States—largely through branch banks have substantial retail operations in America—with roughly \$140,000m in United States assets under their control.

The "Depository Institutions Regulation and Monetary Control Act of 1980" which has just been signed into law by President Carter and was strongly backed and advocated by the Fed—will change the face of American banking during this decade.

Its key provisions are:

1) the gradual lifting of maximum ceiling rates of interest offered to depositors by banks;

2) the abandonment of rare limitations on the maximum rates banks can charge for certain types of loans;

3) expansion of the services that United States building societies, known as savings and loan associations or thrift institutions, can offer;

4) expansion of the Federal

Reserve's powers over all commercial banks in the United States and changes in the methods by which the central bank provides services to commercial banks.

From the viewpoint of control of the money supply this last provision is critical. Many smaller American commercial banks have been able to withdraw from membership of the Federal Reserve system and come fully under the control of state banking authorities. By doing this they may suffer from being less able to obtain all the central bank's services, but they need not place interest free deposits at the central bank in line with Federal Reserve requirements.

The Fed has increasingly sought to improve its control over bank reserves in its efforts to restrict growth of the money stock, but, as the Reserve requirements have been increased, so increasing numbers of commercial banks have withdrawn from the Fed's system. With the growth of withdrawal the central bank's ability to control increases in bank reserves has declined.

Improvement

The new law now gives the Fed the power to impose reserve requirements on all depository institutions for all ordinary accounts and for all time deposits. Now every bank in America is brought under the Fed's umbrella.

This move, as Mr William Miller, the Secretary of the Treasury, has accurately noted, is "a long overdue step in our history a central bank for the entire nation".

The new law also states that

Frank Vogl

all banks will have access to the Fed's facilities. One immediate consequence of this could be an improvement in the physical cash transfer of funds between banks across the country, with all institutions using the Fed's wires and clearing systems. The Fed for the first time will have to issue a specific price list for all banks for its assorted services.

The United States has some 14,500 commercial banks and 4,400 savings and loans institutions. The differences between these financial organizations have declined over the years, as the building societies have sought to find holes in the laws that enable them to offer customers current accounts and cheque books and as the commercial banks have moved more and more into the mortgage business.

The commercial banks and thrift institutions have both suffered severely from high inflation, as customers have turned to money-market mutual funds and other means to obtain rates on their savings more in line with the level of inflation.

The problem has been that the law has set stiff ceilings on what banks can pay depositors. The maximum rate, depending on the length of time deposits, has ranged from about 5 to 7 per cent at commercial banks, with the building societies being able to offer a quarter of one per cent more.

The new law changes all this and the same time provides for a substantial further narrowing of the differences be-

tween the commercial banks and the savings and loans institutions. The law provides for the gradual elimination by 1986 of all ceilings on the rates that these financial institutions can pay on deposits. Further, the law allows the savings institutions for the first time to offer lines of credit, remote service units, consumer loans of all types, credit cards and limited mortgages.

Until now, the banks and building societies have been able to compete in terms of services, so they have resorted to all the devices of modern advertising and marketing to attract depositors. The visitor to the United States is often surprised to realize that the television advertisements claiming that banks and thrift institutions are offering splendid free gifts for new clients.

State laws

Some banks offer free china, radios and television sets. One New York bank offered a Rolls-Royce in exchange for a large long-term deposit. A Washington bank is striving to win deposits by offering silver goblets and another by awarding gold coins.

In time, thanks to the phasing out of deposit ceilings, this absurd system of gifts will give way to sensible competition in rates and services. President Carter has said that he believes that this will help to reduce banking prices to customers and so serve the anti-inflation cause.

In line with the abandonment of fixed rate ceilings in an age of double-figure inflation, the new law abolishes the multitude of laws in individual

American states which go under the name of "usury laws" and which limit the rates lenders can charge borrowers. The new law abolishes these maximum lending charges on a detailed list of loans, including mortgages. States that still wish to impose ceilings now have three years to enact new legislation.

The new law also contains a number of other notable provisions, including one that prevents foreign banks for the next three months from acquiring any more major United States institutions. American savers are also to have their deposits in banks and savings institutions insured by the government up to \$100,000 (the limit used to be \$40,000) and the office of the Comptroller of the Currency is given enhanced powers to supervise the competence of banks.

Laws still remain, however, which prevent commercial banks from opening branches in more than one of the 50 American states (foreign banks were exempted from this rule until another major banking law reform, the International Banking Act of 1978). Bank of America is still restricted, in the United States, to retail activities in California, just as Citicorp is limited to New York.

But the Fed has moved some way in recent years to widening the scope for banks to develop national wholesale banking office networks and increasingly it seems to be a matter of time before national retail banking is allowed. Such a move would, of course, increase still further the degree of bank competition in the United States and now, thanks to the new law, an era of intensified competition is already certain.

Peter Wilson-Smith and R W Shakespeare

Stone-Platt: how the Bank came to play its part

The technical default on a bank loan which precipitated the recent financial crisis at Stone-Platt Industries was, given the role of arbitrator in the involvement of the Bank of England.

As so often in the past when the Bank has involved itself in industrial problems, its role has been low key and carried out with the minimum of publicity. Traditionally the Bank has been reluctant to comment on its part in such matters. Stone-Platt itself will not even say whether the Bank was involved.

The problems Stone-Platt faced, although technical, still demanded an urgent solution, which is why the Bank came to play a part. One of Stone-Platt's loans from Grindlays Bank contained a net worth covenant, stipulating that the group's net assets should not fall below a certain level.

Reserves

After a massive £17.5m withdrawal from reserves relating to trading losses and closure and reorganization costs incurred in 1979, this covenant was breached. This in turn triggered off cross-default clauses with other banks with the result that £30m of unsecured United Kingdom debt became immediately repayable on demand.

Had the problem been spotted in time, Stone-Platt might well have been able to restructure its debt in an orderly fashion, without the problem ever coming to light in the way it did.

As it was, the default was overlooked. Stone-Platt was faced with the urgent renegotiation of the bulk of its borrowings with 13 different parties which included five clearing banks, merchant banks and American banks.

Because of the complexity of the problem—maturity dates and outstanding commitments were all different—the Bank of

England was drawn in to help coordinate the operation.

Sir Jasper Holm, former deputy governor of the Bank, played the role of arbitrator in the negotiations with the various parties, thus helping to ensure a happy ending to a problem which could theoretically have put Stone-Platt into serious financial difficulties.

The Bank clearly sees its involvement in the rescue as a fairly distant one and it has probably carried out similar operations in the past without its role ever coming to light.

Besides this general monitoring role which has evolved with the development of its Industrial Finance Unit. As expressed in the Bank's last annual report, it sees this role as one of keeping in touch through its network of contacts with the problems and prospects of industry. Its last annual report said: "Particular efforts are made to ensure that the Bank is kept informed of developments likely to have an adverse effect on company finances as a whole."

Besides this general monitoring role, the Bank has in the past become involved in the problems of particular sectors or companies. It assisted in rationalizing the baking industry and in sorting out the problems of Spillers.

When J Lyons ran into problems with its business borrowings because of the sharp fall in sterling some years ago, the Bank was hovering quietly in the background.

Like many other industrial companies, Stone-Platt has suffered from a strong pound, high interest rates and poor demand for its products. Its problems which are unique to itself.

Many of these problems can be found in its textile machinery manufacturing operations whose output is now running at 50 per cent of that in 1975

with considerable short-time working. Its main textile machinery division made a trading loss of £2,800,000 last year.

Just over a year ago the company took a close look at its textile machinery factories at Oldham, Bolton and Accrington, in Lancashire, in view of what is described as the "massive worldwide decline in demand for textile machinery".

The company decided that it had to concentrate its operations on two of these factories, and Oldham became the vulnerable centre.

Transfer

At the time it was thought that the best chance of keeping the Oldham factory open was to transfer it from the textile machinery to the electrical division of the parent company. The idea was to continue manufacturing transmissions, saving about 20 per cent of the capacity to making transmis-

sions but to introduce new products including container refrigeration units and an energy saving boiler system.

These plans were announced in January, 1979, and the transfer was due to take place last January.

However, in the intervening 12 months a saving of transmission operations and thus 200 of the 850 jobs at Oldham but this would have to be done by rehousing the transmissions work on a new site because the existing Oldham factory was too large and costly.

The closure was announced in February and this led to a workers' occupation of the Oldham factory. This was resolved only after lengthy negotiations which led to a return to work a week ago.

The planned sale at Oldham of the end of this year and in the company's accounts £7m has been set aside, largely to meet the cost of the closure and the transfer of some of the textile machinery operations to Bolton or Accrington.

"Provident Mutual—A progressive life office."

Extract from the Chairman's statement—
Mr David L.M. Robertson

"The Association's total new annual premium income for 1979 was £22.08m against £19.53m in 1978; an increase of 13%. There was a conspicuous increase in individual pension sales and the self-employed contract sold well in contrast to the general market trend."

"We continued to support this sales effort with limited advertising to selected markets and this has helped to get 'The Provident Mutual' across to intermediaries and the public. Another book was published 'The Well Stocked Granary' aimed at the self-employed and 'The Triple Option Pension Plan' was launched which provides wide investment options to suit personal needs. These activities attracted favourable comment and helped to keep the Association in the public eye as a progressive life office."

"After taking into account changes in the value of assets, total funds at the end of the year increased by £74m in the year to £434.5m."

"Voluntary contributions by pension scheme members were increasingly seen as the short term answer to the problems raised by the erosion in value of preserved pensions after job changes. The Association is now offering contracts of this type to existing pension scheme policyholders and the market generally. The initial reaction has been favourable, although we shall have to wait until 1980 to see these efforts converted into additional business."

Provident Mutual Managed Pension Funds
"Our subsidiary company, Provident Mutual Managed Pension Funds Ltd., once more returned excellent results, both in terms of investment performance and business growth. The funds under management reached £25m, doubling for the third consecutive year."

Investment
"The abolition of exchange controls and the disappearance of the dollar premium create new opportunities for portfolio diversification within the usual constraints imposed by the necessity to meet contractual obligations. The current strength of sterling provides an opportunity to buy selected overseas investments at historically cheap prices. sterling terms and we expect to take advantage of the situation. I have no doubt that we can do this without forgoing any worthwhile investment opportunity in the UK."

"In 1979 our support for the UK government's borrowing needs was once again the predominant area of investment: in total £48.3m was invested in British Government Stocks. We maintained our investment in equity stocks at a similar level to recent years, investing £9.7m of which only £2.8m was overseas."

General
"The present government has stated that it prefers self-regulation to new legislation. This is to be applauded and it is now up to the insurance industry to scrutinise its practices objectively, amend them if appropriate and defend them strongly if necessary. In a society where the consumer lobby is increasingly vocal it is important that misrepresentation and misunderstandings are quickly corrected."

"Once again the management and staff have worked with complete commitment in the interests of policyholders and I take this opportunity to thank them for their splendid efforts during the year."

Summary of Principal Results		
	1979	1978
New Annual Premiums	£m	£m
New sums assured	589	607
Funds at year end	409	349

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25-31 Moorgate, London EC2R 6BA



David Hawson

Business Diary profile: Donald Silk, City alderman manqué

After the man Fleet Street's day newspaper, the City's real reason for the existence of Donald Silk? This question, a man of the City sought hard and man wears Day-



Donald Silk's ubiquitous Guildhall presence.

exchange, and he zealous newsman had to be in filing desks, discovered exclusive information of the City surrounding a plot, property and, in two elec- tion, the favourite of —alt, 1,610 of ward of Alders- of London. Silk ensured continue to controversy by is intention to third time. City ward, which Silk could win, there that the 24 who make up the of the City Cor- reject his elec- have twice done

The alderman decline to say why they refuse to admit Silk into their midst and City goes into following as it does not want him, has rushed to fill this vacuum.

"Why was Silk black-balled?" is a question which will not go away and demands, on the face of it, a straightforward answer. Yet the truth is less than straightforward. First, it may be understood that Silk's rejection is not a falling out between members of the same establishment. Silk was educated at

Magdalen College School, New College, Oxford, and the Hague Academy of International Law. He numbers among his clubs the City, Livery, and the Reform and among his social duties those as trustee and council member of the Chichester Festival Theatre and a governorship of the Bridewell Royal Hospital.

Aged 52, he sits as a Mervy-man of the Worshipful Company of Solicitors, the legal guild within the City.

The people who have black-balled him are of the calibre who fill Who's Who—Sir

Bernard Nathaniel Waley-Cohen, chief alderman, whose father was managing director of Shell; Sir Edward Howard, chairman of the London Rubber Company and a prominent stockbroker; Hugh Bidwell, chairman of Pearce Duff; and Allan Davis, chairman of Lancia Europe, to name a few.

Silk became a common councillor of the Corporation in 1974 and soon made it known that he planned to stand for alderman. This anachronistic position, which within the City dates back to 1249 when one Alexander de Serroun was elected to represent Walbrook ward, was banished in 1974 by local government reorganization everywhere in England except the City. The Corporation was spared because, unlike conventional local authorities, it had elected aldermen.

This decision by the Government highlights one of the common misapprehensions about the Corporation—that it is in some way comparable with a democratically-run local authority. In fact, the Corporation, while not quite a rotten borough, operates very much on the basis of a gentlemen's agreement. Silk is as aware of this as anyone, as he showed by informally approaching a senior alderman and inquiring about his chances of joining this select group, as is the custom.

He was left in no doubt that he would not be welcome. The reason first advanced, he says, was that he was divorced. His motoring record which in 30 years of driving has landed him with fines of less than £100 and the revelation that he had not been selected when local applied to become a magistrate have also been mentioned.

There was also the question of his fervent work as a Zionist. Silk rejected all as bars to the seat of alderman, stood in defiance of the Corporation and won, first by 11 votes and then by 30 in the election which followed.

By the alderman, in doing so, he defeated the barrister Frank McWilliams, who had made the customary speeches to the sitting aldermen and had been told that he would be welcomed to the brotherhood.

But, if Silk has no stains on his character, why should he be rejected? To seek the answer one must look at what the position of alderman of the City of London entails. The holders are inevitably Justices of the Peace and within 10 years might be expected to progress to the Lord Mayor's seat which carries with it the unsavoury promise of a knighthood and an entry to the highest social round in Britain.

The Corporation sees itself as the guardian of this circle and the public election as almost a formality in legitimizing its own choice of aldermen. This may not seem particularly fashionable in the 1980s, but it is indisputably the way in which this arcane 800-year-old system of government operates.

Despite the gossip surrounding Silk, it is likely that he will not become a City alderman for the most boring of reasons. Other good, intelligent men have tried before and failed to convince the Corporation that they are the right sort to join the club.

holds its reports

Worldwide rally in prices

Euromarkets

Interest rates to support their currencies. Indeed, as the dollar tumbled in foreign exchange markets last week, European interest rates eased along with dollar interest rates.

Interbank rates for six-month dollar deposits outside the United States fell to 18.44 per cent last Friday from 19.5 per cent a week earlier. Comparable Deutsche Mark rates fell to 10 per cent from 10.63 per cent while Swiss franc rates eased to 7.63 per cent from 8 per cent.

Short-term rates for other major currencies generally declined by a larger amount.

The shortened trading week caused by the Easter holiday can only have had the advantage of cutting by one day the difficulties which those active in the tanker market face as a matter of course in the present depression. The signs are that conditions are worsening little by little.

Gradual worsening in market conditions

Last week started off slowly and remained so throughout its full length. As a short-term solution, on conditions some owners are arranging limited-period charters, for say, 3/6 months, not wanting to commit themselves too far ahead in case the market improves. Others are slow steaming tankers around the Cape or holding tonnage in the Mediterranean rather than ordering it through Suez to the Gulf where the amount of tonnage still awaiting cargoes far outweighs demand. The final option open

A warning from Unctad follows the collapse of the cocoa pact

Speaking a week after the collapse of the International Cocoa Agreement dealt a serious blow to Unctad's commodity stabilization scheme, Mr. Gamani Corea, secretary-general of Unctad, has given a warning that failure to resolve outstanding issues holding up agreement on a new \$750m fund to finance international commodity pacts could have serious consequences for relations between rich and poor states.

He was speaking in Geneva at the opening of a two-week session of 100-nation committee drafting texts of treaty articles setting up the fund.

"If at this fifth session expectations of progress are not fulfilled, then I feel that there would be very serious lessons that could be learned about the whole process of bringing about changes in the international economic framework through a system of negotiations between member governments in a cooperative way", he said.

Successful completion of negotiations on the fund next month would help to set the stage for a special session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York next September on north-south economic relations, and global discussions which are to follow.

But if differences over the fund remained unresolved, there was a danger these would become interwoven with other negotiations and perhaps add to the complexity of an already difficult process, he said.

The main task of the committee is to complete articles concerning the fund's financial structure and its mode of operation so that the full text of the accord can be adopted at a four-day conference at the end of next month.

Although industrialized and developing states reached agreement on the basic elements of the fund a year ago, the com-

mittee has since made slow progress.

A major function of the fund would be to provide resources totalling \$400m to buy buffer stocks of commodities, including cocoa, built up when prices fell and released when they rose to keep the ranges within agreed limits.

The fund would also have a second facility with target resources of \$350m to finance research and development and schemes to improve productivity, marketing and diversification.

However, industrialized and developing countries are still far apart on such key issues as the role of guarantee capital to be provided by international commodity bodies associated with the fund, and questions relating to borrowing by the fund.

Copper talks. It now looks as though the negotiations between the major United States copper producers and the union which began in January for a new contract will develop into an absolute cliff-hanger, with talks going on right up to the June 30 deadline when the current contract expires.

Renter quotes one Washington source as saying that would be unrealistic to expect

voluntary wage and price guidelines which allow for guide-price increases of 7.5 to 9.5 per cent a year.

The key factor at the time of the negotiations will be the condition of the copper market: if demand is weak and supplies are plentiful, the companies will be more likely to offer a low settlement and this could lead to a work stoppage. But if prices are high and the economy is strong, the companies will seek to avoid a lengthy strike which would be costly.

The steel, aluminium and can industries all have contracts with the steelworkers which expire before the copper contract, but it is thought unlikely that the union would use any steel contract as a pattern for a copper contract.

It is expected that at the forthcoming talks the union and the companies will seek a three-year contract, the same length as in the past.

Mr. Thomas D. Barrow, chairman of the Kennecott Copper Corporation, has told security analysts in the United States that his company is seeing no signs of a recession in its markets.

He mentioned continuing strength in sales of coated abrasives and in demand for copper strip in the demand for copper wire, which is principally a supplier to the General Motors Corporation.

Mr. Barrow said that Kennecott had had "a great first quarter" but added that its outlook for the balance of 1980 was uncertain because of metal price fluctuations and the pending labour negotiations.

He said that he expected copper prices to "go up and down like a yo-yo for a while". He noted that copper fabricators' inventories currently amounted to only about two weeks' supply compared to a normal four to six weeks.

He also said that Kennecott expects to raise up an offer to buy a 49 per cent interest in a Mexican subject to approval by the Mexican government.

Wallace Jackson
Commodities Editor

Prices (yields and premiums)

Offer	Rebid	Offer	Rebid
price	yield	price	yield
1985	13.44	1985	13.44
1986	13.44	1986	13.44
1987	13.44	1987	13.44
1988	13.44	1988	13.44
1989	13.44	1989	13.44
1990	13.44	1990	13.44
1991	13.44	1991	13.44
1992	13.44	1992	13.44
1993	13.44	1993	13.44
1994	13.44	1994	13.44
1995	13.44	1995	13.44
1996	13.44	1996	13.44
1997	13.44	1997	13.44
1998	13.44	1998	13.44
1999	13.44	1999	13.44
2000	13.44	2000	13.44
2001	13.44	2001	13.44
2002	13.44	2002	13.44
2003	13.44	2003	13.44
2004	13.44	2004	13.44
2005	13.44	2005	13.44
2006	13.44	2006	13.44
2007	13.44	2007	13.44
2008	13.44	2008	13.44
2009	13.44	2009	13.44
2010	13.44	2010	13.44
2011	13.44	2011	13.44
2012	13.44	2012	13.44
2013	13.44	2013	13.44
2014	13.44	2014	13.44
2015	13.44	2015	13.44
2016	13.44	2016	13.44
2017	13.44	2017	13.44
2018	13.44	2018	13.44
2019	13.44	2019	13.44
2020	13.44	2020	13.44
2021	13.44	2021	13.44
2022	13.44	2022	13.44
2023	13.44	2023	13.44
2024	13.44	2024	13.44
2025	13.44	2025	13.44
2026	13.44	2026	13.44
2027	13.44	2027	13.44
2028	13.44	2028	13.44
2029	13.44	2029	13.44
2030	13.44	2030	13.44

of fixed interest stocks

Company	Price	Yield	Premium
1985	13.44	13.44	13.44
1986	13.44	13.44	13.44
1987	13.44	13.44	13.44
1988	13.44	13.44	13.44
1989	13.44	13.44	13.44
1990	13.44	13.44	13.44
1991	13.44	13.44	13.44
1992	13.44	13.44	13.44
1993	13.44	13.44	13.44
1994	13.44	13.44	13.44
1995	13.44	13.44	13.44
1996	13.44	13.44	13.44
1997	13.44	13.44	13.44
1998	13.44	13.44	13.44
1999	13.44	13.44	13.44
2000	13.44	13.44	13.44
2001	13.44	13.44	13.44
2002	13.44	13.44	13.44
2003	13.44	13.44	13.44
2004	13.44	13.44	13.44
2005	13.44	13.44	13.44
2006	13.44	13.44	13.44
2007	13.44	13.44	13.44
2008	13.44	13.44	13.44
2009	13.44	13.44	13.44
2010	13.44	13.44	13.44
2011	13.44	13.44	13.44
2012	13.44	13.44	13.44
2013	13.44	13.44	13.44
2014	13.44	13.44	13.44
2015	13.44	13.44	13.44
2016	13.44	13.44	13.44
2017	13.44	13.44	13.44
2018	13.44	13.44	13.44
2019	13.44	13.44	13.44
2020	13.44	13.44	13.44
2021	13.44	13.44	13.44
2022	13.44	13.44	13.44
2023	13.44	13.44	13.44
2024	13.44	13.44	13.44
2025	13.44	13.44	13.44
2026	13.44	13.44	13.44
2027	13.44	13.44	13.44
2028	13.44	13.44	13.44
2029	13.44	13.44	13.44
2030	13.44	13.44	13.44

H. Nightingale & Co. Limited
10 London EC3R 8EB Telephone 01-621 1212

Over-the-Counter Market

Company	Price	Yield	Premium
1985	13.44	13.44	13.44
1986	13.44	13.44	13.44
1987	13.44	13.44	13.44
1988	13.44	13.44	13.44
1989	13.44	13.44	13.44
1990	13.44	13.44	13.44
1991	13.44	13.44	13.44
1992	13.44	13.44	13.44
1993	13.44	13.44	13.44
1994	13.44	13.44	13.44
1995	13.44	13.44	13.44
1996	13.44	13.44	13.44
1997	13.44	13.44	13.44
1998	13.44	13.44	13.44
1999	13.44	13.44	13.44
2000	13.44	13.44	13.44
2001	13.44	13.44	13.44
2002	13.44	13.44	13.44
2003	13.44	13.44	13.44
2004	13.44	13.44	13.44
2005	13.44	13.44	13.44
2006	13.44	13.44	13.44
2007	13.44	13.44	13.44
2008	13.44	13.44	13.44
2009	13.44	13.44	13.44
2010	13.44	13.44	13.44
2011	13.44	13.44	13.44
2012	13.44	13.44	13.44
2013	13.44	13.44	13.44
2014	13.44	13.44	13.44
2015	13.44	13.44	13.44
2016	13.44	13.44	13.44
2017	13.44	13.44	13.44
2018	13.44	13.44	13.44
2019	13.44	13.44	13.44
2020	13.44	13.44	13.44
2021	13.44	13.44	13.44
2022	13.44	13.44	13.44
2023	13.44	13.44	13.44
2024	13.44	13.44	13.44
2025	13.44	13.44	13.44
2026	13.44	13.44	13.44
2027	13.44	13.44	13.44
2028	13.44	13.44	13.44
2029	13.44	13.44	13.44
2030	13.44	13.44	13.44

pared under provision of SSAP15.

Freight

to owners is to return vessels to lay-up, which relatively few have yet resorted to. Through these various tactics owners hope to provide some incentive for the markets to harden, but prospects of this happening are few in the short-term.

In a week that brought no change in rates, large vessels dominated loadings in the Gulf, with Worldwide 29/30 accepted for Western destinations. Among those who secured cargoes were Exxon, Petrobras, Social and Texaco.

Texaco was also active in time-chartering, taking the 352,000-ton Wind Eagle for twelve months trading, beginning May/June.

David Robinson

More share prices
The following will be added to the Share Price List tomorrow and will be published daily in Business News.

Commercial & Industrial
Harris Queensway.

Unit Trust Prices—change on the week

FT Index change on week 435.6+3.0 (0.7%)

Unit Trust	Current Price	Change on Week	Current Yield	Current Dividend
1985	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1986	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1987	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1988	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1989	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1990	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1991	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1992	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1993	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1994	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1995	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1996	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1997	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1998	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
1999	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2000	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2001	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2002	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2003	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2004	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2005	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2006	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2007	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2008	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2009	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2010	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2011	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2012	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2013	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2014	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2015	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2016	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2017	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2018	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2019	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2020	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2021	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2022	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2023	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2024	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2025	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2026	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2027	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2028	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2029	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44
2030	13.44	13.44	13.44	13.44

